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Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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July 2016 deadline for Tinian farmers to use military lands

By JAYSON CAMACHO
jayson_camacho@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Tinian ranchers who are using lands leased by the U.S. military may continue using the lands until July 2016. As of now, though, the military has yet to identify a location where farmers could permanently relocate to raise their cattle.

In a letter to Department of Public Lands Secretary Pedro A. Tenorio on Feb. 9, Department of Navy's Real Estate Division director C. Hope Marini formally wrote that the CNMI is authorized to use the leaseback property until July 31, 2016.

See DEADLINE on Page 4

LOVE NOTES LESLIE REYES

Cast members of the "Let's Fall in Love Again" musical revue are shown on stage during the performance of the Friends of the Arts' special annual Valentine's Day program over the weekend.

See more photos on Page 9

MAN ON THE STREET

The meaning of President's Day in the CNMI

By DENNIS B. CHAN and THOMAS MANGLONA II
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTERS

Every year, on the third Monday of February, the nation takes a day off in commemoration of George Washington's birthday, now a federal holiday known as Presidents' Day. From Washington to Hoover and Roosevelt to Obama, the United States has had 44 individuals who have held the office of the presi-

See PRESIDENT on Page 4

Woman robbed at knifepoint inside car

» Suspect pushed from moving vehicle

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A woman was robbed at knifepoint inside her car in Garapan on Sunday afternoon, but she managed to push the suspect from her moving vehicle.

The suspect was able to flee with the victim's $70 cash, but he was believed to have abrasions on his feet from being dragged by the vehicle.

Police said the suspect was described as a light-skinned Chamorro, tall, and with a cross tattoo on the top of his right hand.

The suspect was wearing camouflage pants and blue flip-flop sandals during the robbery.

The victim was not injured.

See WOMAN on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS

A hacking ring has stolen up to $1 billion from banks around the world.

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OVERDRIVE

With the 2015 Sonata, Hyundai jumps ahead of its Japanese competitors.

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LIFE & STYLE

'Fifty Shades of Grey' whips up a stunning $81.7 million.

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GOT A NEWS TIP?
TEL: 235-6397
235-2440
FAX: 235-3740
EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

Tinian DPS, guesthouse, terminal to undergo upgrades

By JAYSON CAMACHO
jayson_camacho@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

SAN JOSE, Tinian—Tinian's Department of Public Safety headquarters in San Jose, the guesthouse for medically referred Tinian patients on Saipan, and the island's airport terminal will soon see some renovations, according to Tinian Mayor Joey Patrick San Nicolas.

San Nicolas said there will be a groundbreaking for the DPS headquarters' renovation soon. He said a bid had been awarded and funds they will use is the bond interest money from Public Law 17-8.

PL 17-8 helps the Tinian leadership tap into the local license fees collected from pachinko slot machines and poker fees in the second senatorial district (Tinian).

Another renovation in the pipeline is the Tinian guesthouse on Navy Hill on Saipan, which houses medically referred patients from Tinian.

San Nicolas said the Tinian leadership and the island's municipality is working with the Capital Improvement Projects office to assess the units in Lower Navy Hill and use bond interest money from PL 17-8 to upgrade them.

He said an invitation to bid for the Tinian guesthouse renovation will be out soon.

"This is really needed because when they go there, sometimes they need a place to stay, depending on the type of treatment. It could be overnight or a longer period of time. These are temporary quarters for medically referred patients. The units at the guesthouse are in a state of disrepair and [we're] working closely with the CIP office and Office of Management Budget's Vicky Villagomez," he said.

One other project is the terminal at the Tinian International Airport. In 2014, the CNMI government announced that the Commonwealth Ports Authority would solicit bids for the terminal's renovation. The scope of work includes improvements to the arrival and departure terminals, including the connecting corridor.

San Nicolas said the Tinian leadership has started a working group composed of stakeholders like Star Marianas Airlines, Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino, as well as potential investors Alter City Group and Mega Stars Overseas Ltd.

"What we're doing is trying to work with CPA to assist in the movement of the terminal project so that we can have direct flights and in the process we also need to assist CPA as well," he said.

DCRM to vie for coral health grant funds

The Division of Coastal Resource Management is eyeing grant funds under the Coral Reef Initiative program recently announced by the Office of Insular Affairs for the year 2015, said DCRM director Fran Castro yesterday.

She told *Saipan Tribune* that DCRM plans to submit a proposal for the program, which has an available $1 million for 2015.

Laolao Bay watershed restoration was an example of a CNMI coral reef project recently funded by OIA.

Government entities, educational institutions, or nonprofit organizations whose proposals "directly benefit coral reef habitats" are considered for the 2015 funds, according to OIA.

Coral reefs have been described as a cornerstone for island communities, as they protect islands from coastal erosion as well as storm and wave damage. Coral reefs in the CNMI, like in other island areas, have been threatened by runoff pollution and the developing threat of climate change in recent years. ***(Dennis B. Chan)***

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Kia Soul LX retail price $18,995.00 less 20% downpayment. Financing at 7% APR for 60 monthly payments of $300.90 or $138.88 per paycheck based on 26 pay periods per year. Total deferred payment $18,054.00.
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Kia Sedona LX retail price $30,995.00 less 20% downpayment. Financing at 7% APR for 60 monthly payments of $490.99 or $226.61 per paycheck based on 26 pay periods per year. Total deferred payment $29,459.40.

CUC wants ex-CUC staff, lawyer held in contempt

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has asked the federal court to require former CUC staff Carlton Stevens and his attorney, Pamela Brown-Blackburn, to explain why they should not be held in contempt for failing to comply with the court's decision and order.

CUC also requested the U.S. District Court for the NMI to dismiss Stevens' third amended discrimination lawsuit against CUC and some of its officials pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

In its request for an order to show cause, CUC asked the court to give it more time to respond to Stevens' third amended lawsuit until the motion for contempt is resolved.

In the lawsuit filed last week, Stevens named as defendants CUC and its officials—executive director Alan W. Fletcher, human resources director Francisco Cepeda, wastewater manager Richard Wasser, and wastewater and wastewater manager Paul Raczkowski.

Stevens is suing CUC and its top officials for alleged racial discrimination with respect to privileges of employment and retaliation and is demanding unspecified damages, court costs, and attorney's fees.

Stevens asked the court to declare that the defendants' discriminatory employment practices are in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

Stevens, an African-American, is suing CUC and its four officials for allegedly not renewing his contract as direct responsible charge operator in CUC's wastewater division, providing him an inoperable computer, and not providing him an office space, among other complaints.

Last Feb. 4, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona dismissed Stevens' second amended discrimination lawsuit, but gave him a final chance to amend his complaint a third time.

Manglona granted CUC's motion to dismiss Stevens' second amended complaint for failure to adequately plead compliance with the statutory preconditions to bring a Title VII of the Civil Rights Act claim (discrimination).

In CUC's motions for order to show cause and for dismissal of the third complaint, CUC counsel James S. Sirok asked the court to find Stevens and his lawyer in contempt for failing to comply with Manglona's Feb. 4 order, which limited the amendment "to alleging facts and attaching documents that are relevant to the determination of whether Title VII's filing deadlines and other exhaustion requirements have been met."

Sirok said Manglona also noted that in the initial complaint and first amended complaint, Stevens sued four individuals in their personal capacities, and that she dismissed all claims against the four with prejudice.

Dismissed with prejudice means Stevens cannot re-open the claims again the four.

In the second amended complaint, however, Stevens changed the caption to name the four in their official capacity, which Sirok said "was beyond the scope of the leave to amend factual allegations that the court granted in the [first] order."

Sirok pointed out that Manglona stated in her order that if Stevens wishes to amend his complaint, he must file a motion for leave to amend the pleading and the caption and show good cause why leave should be granted.

The CUC counsel said Stevens added numerous substantive factual allegations to the third amended complaint, which changed the nature of the complaint and went far beyond the restriction limiting amendments to allegations "relevant to the determination of whether Title VII's filing deadlines and other exhaustion requirement have been met."

In addition, Sirok said, Stevens' third amended complaint continues to incorporate in its caption and its allegations the names of the four individuals as being sued in their "official" capacities without first requesting from the court permission to do so, and demonstrating good cause.

Sirok said Stevens deleted numerous allegations but added some 39 new substantive allegations, and made several other substantive amendments to the allegations in the second amended complaint.

Such amendments, he pointed out, go beyond the limitation ordered by the court and dramatically changes the nature and substance of the allegations previously made against CUC.

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MVA urged to disclose trust fund status

By JOEL D. PINAROC
joel_pinaroc@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Marianas Visitors Authority is being asked to provide a status update on its trust fund use and expenditures for each of the senatorial districts in the Commonwealth.

Rep. Joseph Lee Pan Guerrero (R-Saipan) has drafted a letter addressed to MVA managing director Perry Tenorio and the MVA board calling for a meeting on Feb. 23, 2015, on Capital Hill.

In his letter of invitation, the lawmaker said the tourism body will also be requested to provide quarterly reports on appropriations and expenditures.

Guerrero said the meeting is more of a "meet-and-greet" but he will also ask the MVA officials on how they plan to boost tourism in the Commonwealth and to lay down their plans for the rest of the year and beyond.

Guerrero, who heads the House Committee on Commerce and Tourism, said his committee will also request the MVA to give an "overview presentation on promotional activities for [fiscal year] 2015, to include development, expansion, and improvement of existing tourist facilities, promoting indigenous arts and crafts, preservation of the cultural heritage of CNMI, beautification programs, and other related tourism activities."

The committee will also ask for tourist arrival data, promotional expenditures, projects and other related MVA activities for fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

The MVA trust fund is provided for in Public Law 18-1, which increased the hotel occupancy tax by 5 percentage points, from 10 percent to 15 percent. The money raised from the hotel occupancy tax hike is then pooled in the MVA trust fund.

High surf advisory until 10am today

A large north swell and northeast wind waves will to continue to produce hazardous surf along north facing reefs until this morning, Tuesday, according to the CNMI Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

A high surf advisory is now in effect until 10am today.

Hazardous surf of 7 to 9 feet is expected to persist until this morning along north facing reefs. Surf should fall below hazardous levels later in the day.

The public, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid boating in these conditions. If travel by boat is necessary, exercise caution, especially near reef lines and when entering or leaving harbors and inlets. Do not venture near exposed reefs and beaches, especially those along north facing reefs as rip currents will be life threatening. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

‘Leo Daly littered NMI with inadequately designed buildings’

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Nebraska corporation that designed and built the defective terminal project at the Francisco C. Ada International Airport has littered the CNMI with inadequately designed buildings, according to attorney Sean E. Frink.

Frink filed in federal court last week Boeing Company’s and Boeing Service Company’s first amended lawsuit against the Nebraska-based corporation, Leo A. Daly Company, or LAD.

Frink said Boeing worked closely with the federal government to implement upgraded security systems at airports following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority contracted with Boeing for the design and construction of the terminal project. Boeing entered into subcontracts with LAD, under which LAD was responsible for both the design and construction management of the project.

Boeing is now suing LAD for breach of contract, express contractual indemnity, implied contractual indemnity, professional malpractice, negligence, violation of CNMI Consumer Protection Act, violations of Building Code, bad faith, and contributions.

Boeing asked the U.S. District Court for the NMI to hold LAD liable to pay them over $5 million in damages and reimburse them of all costs and attorneys’ fees.

Frink stated that Boeing had no choice but to file the lawsuit because LAD refused to fix the structure, to settle the parties’ dispute, or to reimburse Boeing for the damage caused by LAD’s errors.

Frink said that, as Boeing later learned, LAD’s errors were not unique to the terminal project as LAD made similar errors on at least two other projects within the CNMI. He did not name the two other projects.

Court records show that the CNMI government sued LAD in 2009 for the defective building plan of the dialysis center.

The dialysis center project started out as a $5-million undertaking during then-governor Juan N. Babauta’s administration. The project ballooned to a $22-million project in the course of its five-year construction.

LAD settled the government’s $10-million lawsuit for $2 million, with no admission of liability on its side.

In CPA’s project, Frink said that LAD failed to design the project consistent with applicable seismic codes governing earthquake resistance—it completely ignored applicable seismic code requirements.

“As a result, the project as designed by LAD and built contains serious structural deficiencies, and also caused the existing structure—to which the project was connected—to violate seismic code requirements by more than tripling the mass of the existing structure without seismically upgrading it, rendering the existing structure seismically hazardous,” he said.

Frink said as a result of LAD’s negligent and deficient design, CPA issued a demand to Boeing, asking Boeing to tear down and rebuild the project and pay CPA millions of dollars in damages and attorneys’ fees.

CPA and Boeing negotiated the matter for more than a year.

Frink said Boeing attempted to involve LAD in the negotiations, to solicit input into the most efficient way to repair the facility and resolve the disputes at once.

Frink said LAD did not accept Boeing’s tender of the CPA’s claim without reservation and did not participate in good faith in the parties’ discussions, and thus Boeing negotiated a full and fair settlement of CPA’s claims.

Last August, U.S. District Court for the NMI designated Judge J. Michael Seabright dismissed CPA’s lawsuit against Boeing after the parties reached a settlement that has been approved by the Superior Court.

Seabright, however, ruled that Boeing’s lawsuit against LAD, which is also pending before the federal court, will continue.

In its lawsuit, CPA asked the court to order the defendants to pay in excess of $1 million for damages, courts costs, and attorney’s fees.

CUC sets closing date for proposals on energy plan

By JOEL D. PINAROC
joel_pinaroc@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has set Feb. 23 as the closing date for a request of proposal to create an integrated resource management plan for the utility firm.

An integrated resource plan’s purpose is to determine the best combination of both base load and renewable energy sources capable of providing reliable power at the lowest price to consumers.

The integrated resource plan, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs, is eyed as one of the ways for the CUC to bail itself out of its financial woes and at the same time lower utility costs in the Commonwealth.

The RFP is designed so that CUC gains full understanding of feasible options, operating characteristics and system impacts, and costs. The proposals will be evaluated by Leidos Engineering LLC.

The utility firm is seeking all economically and technically feasible power supply options, including traditional fossil-fueled resources as well as renewable energy project.

In a closed-door meeting with Lt. Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres on Capital Hill last Feb. 6, CUC officials reiterated the utility firm’s financial difficulties.

Torres said his office will work with CUC to help the utility company address its financial woes.

CUC reported that issues such as volatility of prices, the servicing of disconnected island communities, declining power generation and distribution due to a lack of reinvestment over time, and years of poor financial performance, due mostly to rates that have not recovered the cost of service, continue to hamper the utility group.

Torres said the years of poor financial planning will require CUC to “find a balance between achieving the lowest possible rates for the many families and businesses in the CNMI and providing the necessary resources to keep CUC viable and operational in the long term.”

The official said he supports the creation of the integrated resource management plan.

Dan V. Jackson, a representative of economists.com, the rate consultant of CUC, disclosed that the utility agency incurred about $80 million in operating losses since 2006.

Jackson warned that CUC might have one year left if it continues to struggle financially and that the No. 1 reason for CUC’s financial woes is the non-payment of the government’s past arrears.

Jackson said that government receivables have been increasing since 2013. In October 2013, government arrears stood at $20.39 million. It rose in March 2014 to $26.16 million. It rose further to $27.06 million in October 2014, and, as of February this year, it is now at a whopping $28.74 million.

DEADLINE

From Page 1

The CNMI leased back 7,000 acres of the land west of the Tinian International Airport. The CNMI and the Department of Defense signed a leaseback agreement in 1994 for a portion of the leased public property for small agricultural and grazing activities.

The U.S. government leased back approximately 6,458 acres (2,614 hectares) of the land for $1 per acre per year. For the past 37 years, Tinian ranchers have been using the leaseback property to pasture cattle, other livestock, and grow crops.

Marini wrote that the farmers could continue to use the land under the leaseback agreement but, should DoD not “repossess the leaseback property, the lease reverts to a month-to-month tenancy effective July 31, 2016.”

“In addition, land use analysis is presently underway and it is the intent of the parties to identify locations within the leaseback area wherein members of the Tinian Cattlemen Association may be permitted to continue livestock grazing and range activities if and where compatible with DoD purposes after termination of the leaseback,” she added.

Lt. Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said Sunday this is a great opportunity for Tinian ranchers to use the leaseback lands so they can continue grazing their cattle.

Tinian Cattlemen Association president Jose Villacruz said the association is very grateful to DoD for the initial step in working with the ranchers on Tinian.

Villacruz said majority of their ranchers are grazing within military land and they are very hopeful that by the time the military moves into the land, they can coexist.

“We had a meeting last August and it was positive and this letter is a result of that. They told us that they will work with us with the renewal until 2016 and identify a surplus land in the immediate future and work with us in the future and make sure the beef initiative is not harmed. We’re very grateful that the first step has materialized and we’re very excited. Hopefully, in the very near future, addressing the issues of the land will be better,” Villacruz said.

Beef initiative

According to Villacruz, Tinian cattlemen have held off pushing their beef initiative due to the leaseback issue. With the leaseback only being extended to 2016, that means there aren’t concrete plans yet to relocate them to a long-term area, he added.

The beef initiative arose from the passage of a law in Guam that eased the quarantine regulations for beef and allows the entry of cattle from the CNMI into Guam.

Villacruz said there are 39 separate ranchers with close to 2,000 heads of cattle on leaseback lands.

“We are not expanding the numbers or the beef initiative with the leaseback only being extended. Once we get a long term access to the land, everyone will invest to [increase] the number of animals for sale. We have been giving the renewal, now the question remains, what is the next step?” Villacruz said.

PRESIDENT

From Page 1

dency. In the CNMI, though, the holiday for some people is a three-day weekend and time for a barbecue at the *bantalan* [Sugar Dock]. These reporters took to the streets for thoughts and comments about people’s favorite Presidents and if islanders should be allowed to vote for America’s commander-in-chief.

Saipan resident Jonathan Pangelinan’s favorite President is Barack Obama. “He is the first black President that the U.S has ever had. People who are the first to do anything inspires me to be a ‘first’ too,” he said.

Pangelinan believes that people in the CNMI should be able to vote “since we are under their government and the Presidents do have a say in government actions that can apply to the CNMI.”

San Vicente Elementary School counselor Chris “Charisma” Cabrera echoed Pangelinan, saying his favorite president would be a “toss-up” between President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Obama.

“They both defied the odds,” Cabrera told *Saipan Tribune*. “One was in a wheelchair and served three terms, and the other became the first African-American President. …Obama has also pushed for and strongly advocated many areas and issues I hold close to my heart.”

Like Pangelinan, Cabrera “wholeheartedly” believes that as U.S. residents and citizens, “we should have that privilege [to vote] extended to us.”

“Wow, I do not think I can pick just one,” said Mount Carmel School president Galvin Deleon Guerrero, when asked who is his favorite president.

“John Adams has inspired me with his tenacity, but disappointed me with the Sedition Acts. Thomas Jefferson has inspired me with his eloquence, but disappointed me with his anonymous and very vicious attacks on his close friends. JFK [John F Kennedy] and Clinton have inspired me with their call for civic action, but disappointed me with their infidelities.”

Guerrero noted that although President Obama has inspired him with a sense of hope for change, he is disappointed with his “naive disregard for political realities.”

“FDR has inspired me with his bold optimism, but disappointed me with how he set up the military-industrial complex. I guess that leaves Abraham Lincoln as the only one who has inspired me without disappointing me too much. He has inspired me with his moral compass, political acumen, and eloquence as a public speaker,” he explained.

Guerrero thinks that people in the CNMI should be able to cast a ballot for America’s President, “who has the power to send our brave men and women into war.”

Maria Theresa Elizabeth Dizon, a top student at Marianas High School, echoed Guerrero when she chose Lincoln as her favorite.

“He began the process that led to the end of slavery,” she said. “He was also known for bravery and patriotism. I’ve admired his tenacity and willpower against all odds. He did not have much of an education and came from a small town. Despite that, he became a lawyer. It’s my dream to become a lawyer too!”

Franklin Delano Roosevelt is the president Kanani Lee admires the most. “He was very inspiring. He really maintained the strength of the country as the war carried on,” she said. She also explained that the CNMI, as a U.S territory, should be entitled to the same rights as Americans residing in the states.

Victor Angeline III, a visiting civil engineer from New Jersey who spent his President’s Day on Managaha, agrees that the CNMI should have the right to vote for President.

As for his favorite president, that would be Ronald Reagan, for “his hopeful, enthusiastic message for America’s future.”

WOMAN

From Page 1

Department of Public Safety spokesman Travis Hurst said DPS received a call from a female caller about a robbery at 2:20pm on Sunday.

Hurst said police investigation showed that the female victim had just come from the Top Store in Dandan and had returned to her vehicle in the parking lot when the suspect got into the passenger seat of the car.

The suspect put a knife to the victim’s throat and ordered her to drive. He gave her directions as they drove.

The suspect repeatedly asked the victim, “Where is it?” The victim did not know what he was referring to.

As the vehicle was making a right turn to Kopa Di Oru Street in Garapan, the suspect took the knife from her neck to reach for something in the backseat.

At that point, the victim leaned over, opened the passenger door, and pushed the robber out of the car. The suspect fell out but he held on to the seatbelt. After he was dragged for a short distance, the suspect let go and fled.

The victim left the area and called the police.

Farmer's co-op membership meeting sometime in October

The first general membership meeting for the CNMI Farmer's Cooperative, which runs the Garapan Public Market, may be held sometime in October this year, according to co-op president Maria "Frica" Pangelinan.

Co-op bylaws call for an annual meeting once a year, according to her.

She said the October date would coincide with their report to the Legislature on the grant money they received last year.

The Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation approved $60,000 to support the market's daily operations in December. With these funds, the market was able to buy new equipment like a chiller for their produce, among other things. The market also acquired a phone number, and extended their hours of operation.

Since they opened in August, the market has had a hard time getting off the ground, operating on a deficit, reportedly due to lack of produce to sell during bad weather, among other things.

Yesterday, Pangelinan said, business was "still slow" but getting better.

The Garapan Public Market opened in August, funded through a $200,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. ***(Dennis B. Chan)***

Improvements of roads, sidewalks sought

By JOEL D. PINAROC
joel_pinaroc@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A lawmaker is seeking the assistance of the Department of Public Works on improvement projects for some key areas on Saipan.

Rep. Angel A. Demapan (R-Saipan) said he has requested DPW to help him assess the various community improvement projects his office is proposing.

One of the projects is the construction of a sidewalk in Dandan Road.

Demapan, in a letter to the acting DPW secretary James Ada, said the construction of a paved sidewalk along the southbound lane stretching from the frontage of Dandan Middle School's gate to the south end of Dandan Road and proper markings of pedestrian crosswalks "will help alleviate safety concerns raised by members of the community, especially when students are walking to and from school."

"Additionally, the construction of a sidewalk in the area will provide residents with another alternative for health and wellness walks right within their home village," the lawmaker said.

An improvement project is also being eyed along a portion of San Vicente Loop.

According to Demapan, for several years now, residents and motorists have expressed frustration over the longstanding damage at the southern portion of San Vicente Loop.

"Residents who drop off and pick up students at San Vicente Elementary School frequently utilize this road. However, the current state of this portion of San Vicente Loop is hazardous, causes unnecessary traffic, and is a burden to motor vehicle owners," he said.

Another project that Demapan wants the DPW to look into is the paving of an access road behind the San Vicente Elementary School.

He said the access road that links the backside of San Vicente Elementary School grounds to Laulau Bay Drive is a concern that has also been raised by members of the community for quite some time.

"Widening and paving this access road would alleviate the overwhelming traffic congestion that occurs at the beginning and end of each school day at San Vicente Elementary School," Demapan noted.

The lawmaker said the provision of data from the DPW will help his office identify the needed funds for these projects through legislation.

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'Ex-firefighter also wrote letter to local court judge in drug case'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Richard Sullivan Benavente, a former firefighter who wrote two letters to a federal judge in connection with the Raymond B. Roberto case, also wrote an untruthful letter to a local court judge in an illegal drugs case, the federal court found out.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona brought up Benavente's letters in her order on Thursday that granted the U.S. government's motion in limine, and denied defendant's motion to disqualify three prosecutors from the case.

Motion in limine refers to a request made before the start of a trial requesting that the judge rule that certain evidence may, or may not, be introduced to the jury in a trial.

Manglona disclosed that, in early April 2014, Benavente wrote a letter to her, stating that he was the owner of a cell phone with the number 789-3443.

That number was significant, Manglona said, because the U.S. government alleged that the phone had belonged to Roberto, and that text messages associated with that number were used to arrange Roberto's sexual encounters with female minors.

Roberto, 41, a former acting director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife, was acquitted by a jury in September last year of charges that he enticed three minors to engage in prostitution and tampered a witness while he was in jail.

Manglona said that, on April 25, 2014, two FBI agents in the presence of three prosecutors interviewed Benavente about the number 789-3443. Attorney Mark Hanson represented Benavente in that meeting.

At first, consistent with his letter to Manglona, Benavente stated that he used the 789-3443 number to contact the minors until his arrest, and had also allowed "Ray King" to use the number for the same purpose.

Benavente told the FBI that the 789-3443 SIM card should be in the possession of the local police after his initial arrest.

However, Manglona said, Benavente changed his tune after being warned of possible criminal charges for lying and after speaking privately with Hanson.

Benavente "confessed to lying about the entire claim of using the 789-3443 cell phone to communicate with the minors."

According to an FBI report, Benavente stated that he was approached by Roberto in prison and asked to lie on Roberto's behalf.

Benavente lied about the SIM card being in the custody of the local police because the office apparently had a history of misplacing evidence. He accused "Ray King" of using 789-3443 because some of the messages between that number and the minors referred to a "Ray."

Shortly after the April 25, 2014, meeting, Benavente changed his story yet again, Manglona said.

She said Benavente wrote another letter to her in May 2014, again stating that he was the owner of the 789-3443 number and that he only changed his story because he felt pressured by the U.S. government and his lawyer, Hanson.

Benavente repeated that story during his testimony on Sept. 9, 2014.

Manglona said this was not the first time that Benavente had written a letter to a judge about another defendant's culpability.

In March 2014, Benavente allegedly told the FBI that a few years earlier, he had written a letter to a judge in an attempt to exonerate a defendant charged in CNMI courts with selling drugs.

Manglona said Benavente knew his letter was a lie because he had allegedly been used as a confidential informant during three "buy-bust" operations against the defendant, but agreed to write the letter and deliver it to the defendant's lawyer in exchange for drugs.

Manglona said that when Benavente failed to receive the quantities of drugs promised, he recanted.

In his motion in limine, Benavente asked the court to preclude the U.S. government from presenting any evidence of his having written an exculpatory letter on behalf of a defendant facing trial in local court in exchange for "ice," then retracting that letter when he was provided less "ice" than promised.

In denying Benavente's motion in limine, Manglona said the evidence is admissible for a non-character purpose, is relevant to the crime charged, and may be properly admitted with a limiting instruction.

Manglona said the evidence Benavente seeks to suppress also indicates his willingness to falsely exculpate other criminal defendants by writing a letter to a judge and having it delivered through the defendant's attorney.

Although the evidence could suggest the prohibited inference that Benavente has a character of dishonesty and acted in accordance with that character when he allegedly perjured himself at the Roberto trial, it also shows intent, plan, and modus operandi for obstructing justice, Manglona said.

"In other words, the evidence supports the motion that this particular pattern of behavior is how Benavente operates," she said.

Manglona said Benavente's past willingness to falsely exculpate a defendant closely matches what he is accused of doing in this case.

Manglona said Benavente alleges that he wrote the first exculpatory letter only "several years ago," and the FBI report and his testimony at the Roberto trial—where he admitted to writing the letter—provide sufficient evidence that the past act really happened.

Additionally, Manglona said, the alleged falseness of both exculpatory letters ties the evidence to this case.

"The fact that in one instance Benavente was motivated to change his story by his drug habit, and in the other by pressure from his attorney, is not consequential. In both circumstances, according to Benavente, his will was overborne. It is another similarity," Manglona said.

She said the evidence is extremely relevant to what Benavente is accused of—obstructing justice. She said its probative value exceeds the danger of unfair prejudice.

Manglona said the court can instruct the jury on the proper scope of its consideration if the evidence is admitted.

Manglona also denied Benavente's motion to disqualify assistant U.S. attorneys Garth Backe and Ross Naughton from prosecuting this case.

Benavente argued that, as witnesses to the April 25, 2014, interview, Backe and Naughton should be disqualified because of the advocate-witness rule and the rule against vouching.

The advocate-witness rule prevents an attorney from appearing as a witness and an advocate in the same litigation.

Manglona said the advocate-witness rule does not prervent Backe and Naughton from prosecuting this case because neither of them could present evidence not already available to Benavente through FBI agents.

Benavente, who already pleaded guilty to a count of exploitation of a child, has asked the court to disqualify the two prosecutors from handling his separate perjury case.

Benavente, through counsel Dotts, said Backe and Naughton are percipient witnesses to a critical event in the case.

Dotts said all three could be called to testify and as such, none of the three should prosecute this case.

Last February, Benavente pleaded guilty to a count of sexual exploitation of a child. It is relate to the June 23, 2013, incident in which he "induced" the female minor to have sex while being videotaped on a cell phone.

Benavente is still under the custody.

Last September, Benavente and Randy A. Igisomar, were indicted in federal court for allegedly lying during Raymond Roberto's trial.

The indictment charged Benavente with three counts of perjury, and one count of obstruction of justice. It also includes a criminal forfeiture allegation. He pleaded not guilty.

Task force on improving health screening ups recommendation

By JAYSON CAMACHO
jayson_camacho@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S Preventive Services Task Force recently expanded its recommendation for broader screening guidelines to help detect pre-diabetic conditions in people, much like what Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) called for last year.

According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sally Burwell, the task force works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services.

At the time, Sablan noted that recommendations were only for hypertension. This time, Burwell said the task force is updating its recommendation on screening for diabetes.

In October last year, the task force posted a draft evidence review and draft recommendation statement for public comment that was due on Nov. 3.

New evidence that was submitted through various public entities and people demonstrate that diabetes may be prevented or delayed in people who are at very high risk of developing the disease due to changes in how their bodies process glucose.

"On the basis of this new evidence, the task force proposed screening for abnormal food glucose and type 2 diabetes mellitus in adults who are at increased risk for diabetes B grade recommendation," Burwell said.

This means that the task force has updated its definition of people who may be at risk for abnormal blood sugar or diabetes as including people with any one of the following risk factors:

- Age 45 or older
- Overweight or obese

Having a first degree relative (parent, sibling, or child) with diabetes; or

- Women with a history of gestational diabetes or who have polycystic ovarian syndrome.

"Based on this new information the task force has proposed greatly expanding screening when compared to its prior recommendation," Burwell said.

Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. CEO Esther Muna has backed Sablan call for a broader

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP NO.: RFP15-DCCA/NAP-036

SUBMISSION: MAY 11, 2015 TIME: 10:00A.M.

"TO PROVIDE CNMI NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM'S ELIGIBILTY SYSTEM FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, CNMI NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM"

THE SCOPE OF WORK FOR THIS PROJECT WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTER **FEBRUARY 10, 2015** AT THE **DCCA-NAP OFFICE.** LOCATED AT THE JTV BUILDING IN AS LITO, SAIPAN DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

A PRE-PROPOSAL MEETING WILL BE HELD AT **9:00 A.M., LOCAL TIME, ONFEBRUARY 27, 2015** AT THE DCCA-NAP OFFICE. **QUESTIONS** REGARDING THIS RFP MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING AND ARE DUE NO LATER THAN THE CLOSE ODF BUSINESS, **MARCH 26, 2015** AND MUST BE DIRECTED TO MR. WALTER MACARANAS, NAP ADMINISTRATOR BY FAX TO (670) 664-2850 OR E-MAIL TO **dccanap@pticom.com**

THE GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSALS AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTION IN A PROPOSAL IF IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE PROPERTY OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/s/ **LAURA T. OGUMORO**
SECRETARY OF DCCA

/S/ **HERMAN S. SABLAN**
DIRECTOR, P&S

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Tel. (670) 234-6866/234-9447/234-7689/234-7670 • Fax. (670) 234-9021
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Vice Chairman of the Board, is hereby giving notice that a Regular Board Meeting is scheduled on Thursday, February 19, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. at the NMHC's Conference Room, Garapan, Saipan. The public is welcome to submit written or oral comments regarding the agenda below. Individuals interested in attending the meeting and needing special accommodations are requested to contact NMHC in advance.

I. **PRELIMARY MATTERS**
a. Call to Order
b. Roll Call
c. Adoption of Agenda

II. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

III. **CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**
a. Division Reports
b. Proposed FY 2016 Budget
c. QAP 2015-2016 Board Resolution
d. Staff Training
e. CDBG Asset Acquisition

IV. **OLD BUSINESS**
a. Garapan Annex RFP
b. Travel Policy

V. **NEW BUSINESS**
a. Loans for Review and Approval

VI. **LEGAL COUNSEL'S PENDING/ONGOING REPORT**

VII. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

VIII. **OTHER MATTERS**

IX. **ADJOURNMENT**

(Note: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a) (7) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.)

/s/ TOM GLENN A. QUITUGUA
Vice Chairman of the Board

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

JENEQUA LOZANO, Petitioner, -vs- WILLIAM LOZANO Respondent,] FCD-DI] CIVIL ACTION] NO. 15-0031]]] SUMMONS] FOR] PUBLICATION]

TO THE ABOVE NAME RESPONDENT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is on file with the court, within thirty (30) days after service of the Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to Petitioner whose address is P.O. Box 66038 Beaufort, SC 29904 as soon as practical after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at P.O. Box 500307 Susupe, Saipan, MP 96950. It may be prepared for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or Mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice. If you fail to file and answer in accordance with this summons, judgment by default may be taken against you for relief in the complaint.

Dated this 30th day of January, 2015

/s/ Clerk of Court

MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ, F0122
THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC
POST OFFICE BOX 5222
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS 96950
TEL: (670) 234-6547
FAX: (670) 234-9537

ATTORNEY FOR Plaintiff:

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

BANK OF THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA, Plaintiff, -v- JOHN HENRY I. TAGABUEL and MICHELLE T. IGINOEF, aka MICHELLE MARIA I. TAGABUEL, Defendants.) CIVIL ACTION) No. 12-0302

THIRD AMENDED NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on July 30, 2013, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth herein below, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendants in and to the following property: Lot no. 010K 77, situated in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, containing an area of 901 square meters, more or less, as more particularly shown on Drawing/ Cadastral Plat no. 010 K 01, the original of which was recorded August 19, 1987, as File no. 87-2911, at the Office of Commonwealth Recorder.

Date, Time and Place of Sale. The sale will be held on Friday, March 13, 2015, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at the Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public.

Terms and Condition of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

DATED, this 10th day of February, 2015

/s/ MICHAEL A. WHITE, Auctioneer

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Belated happy birthday to our dearest Matthew O. Deleon Guerrero! Wishing you the best of luck in all the adventures that life has in store for you. We love you always! Greetings come from friends and family.

Suspect in 'ice' case not allowed to withdraw counsel

The federal court has denied the request of a suspect in a methamphetamine or "ice" distribution case to withdraw his counsel.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona made the decision Friday after Zhao Sheng Zeng indicated that he is now willing to accept David Banes as his counsel.

Manglona noted that no new counsel has entered his or her appearance to represent Zeng.

The judge, however, advised Zeng of his right to retain private counsel and that if he wishes to pay for Banes' services, the attorney would know what to do with that.

In his motion to withdraw, Banes stated that for more than one month Zeng told him that his family has hired a new lawyer whom he has not met and whose name he does not know.

Banes said he repeatedly informed Zeng that no lawyer has contacted him saying he or she has been retained.

Zeng reportedly offered to hire Banes privately upon a certain condition, which Banes could not agree to, resulting in Zeng demanding that he withdraw as counsel.

Banes said it was Zeng's request to file the motion to withdraw.

At the hearing, Manglona asked Zeng if he still wishes for another attorney to represent him. Zeng explained that he was not able to make phone calls at the Department of Corrections because he does not speak English and only those with phone cards can make calls. The defendant stated that since he is unable to make phone calls, he would like to keep Banes as his counsel.

Manglona advised Zeng that he or his family may hire a private attorney at any time, but at this time, there is no other attorney entering his or her appearance.

Manglona set Zeng's sentencing for May 15 and remanded him into the custody of the U.S. Marshal.

Last Dec. 3, Manglona ordered Zeng to forfeit to the U.S. government $7,900 in the form of a personal money judgment as a result of his guilty plea to count one of the indictment.

Federal agents arrested Zeng last July 29 after an indictment was filed in federal court. The indictment charged him with one count of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine and three counts of distribution of methamphetamine.

According to the indictment, from May 9, 2013, through June 19, 2013, Zeng conspired with others to distribute "ice." Zeng also allegedly intentionally distributed "ice" on May 9, 16, and 19, 2013. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp
Website: http://www.nmhc.gov.mp

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
NMHC RFP 2015-002
(This ad is paid for by NMHC with HUD funds.)

"ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING DESIGN OF THE OLEAI SPORTS COMPLEX TRACK AND FIELD RENOVATION DRAWINGS"

The Acting Chairman of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("NMHC"), a subsidiary public corporation of the Commonwealth Development Authority ("CDA"), a public corporation of the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands, is soliciting sealed proposals for the DESIGN OF THE OLEAI SPORTS COMPLEX TRACK AND FIELD RENOVATION DRAWINGS.

Proposal packets will be available on Tuesday, February 17, 2015, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI Holidays.

A mandatory Pre-Proposal Conference is scheduled on Tuesday, March 03, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. at the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation's Office Conference Room. Any Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to Mr. Jesse S. Palacios, Corporate Director, P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 or fax to (670) 234-9021, no later than Tuesday, March 10, 2015, 4:30 p.m., local time.

One (1) original and three (3) copies of the proposal shall be submitted in a sealed enveloped marked/stamped "Confidential" and labeled **"NMHC RFP 2015-002"**, to the Division of Procurement and Supply, Lower Base, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 a.m., Friday, March 13, 2015.**

This project is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), under its respective program Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) provided to NMHC, which functions as the Public Housing Authority (PHA) for the Commonwealth.

The Government reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive any defects in the said proposals, if in the sole opinion of NMHC, to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/Tom Glenn Quitugua
Acting Chairman
Board of Directors
Northern Marianas Housing Corporation

/s/Herman S. Sablan
Director
Procurement and Supply

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514

Notice to the General Public and all Saipan-based Section 8 New Construction Multifamily Program Applicants

Mihaville and Koblerville Subdivisions
(February 10, 2015)

Pursuant to Section IX: Waiting List Management of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation's (NMHC) revised Tenant Selection Plan, NMHC wants to respectfully inform the general public and all Saipan-based Section 8 New Construction Multifamily Program applicants of the following:

1. NMHC will **STOP** accepting applications for its Saipan-based Section 8 New Construction Multifamily Program for 2 bedroom units beginning on March 01, 2015, due to an excessive number of active Saipan applicants on the program's Waiting List. NMHC will notify the public as soon as it is ready to begin accepting applications.

2. NMHC will be updating the program's Waiting List for its Saipan-based Section 8 New Construction Multifamily Program for 2 bedroom units beginning on March 01, 2015, by removing applicants:

   a. Who are no longer interested in participating in the program;
   b. Who are no longer qualified for assisted housing; or
   c. Who fail to respond to a written request to update the information on their applications.

Written notices will be mailed out to every applicant listed on the program's waiting list. Upon receipt of a written notice, applicants are requested and **required** to contact NMHC at Tel. Nos. 234-6866 or 234-9447 or via email at housingdiv@nmhc.gov.mp.

Thank you and please direct all questions regarding this public notice to David Chargualaf, Program and Housing Division Manager, or Melinda Babauta at NMHC's Main Office on Saipan at any of the aforementioned telephone numbers or via email at phdmanager@nmhcgov.net and housingdiv@nmhc.gov.mp, respectively.

Peace Corps Response Volunteers to arrive in Chuuk soon

Gov. Johnson Elimo and Robert Reid. U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

From left: Robert Reid and Kiki Stinnett. U.S. EMBASSY KOLONIA

Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Chuuk for nearly 50 years, with the first Volunteers arriving in the State in 1966. This relationship continues to grow and in 2015, the Peace Corps Response Volunteer program will also be instituted in Chuuk.

The Peace Corps Response program differs from the traditional Peace Corps Volunteer program, and focuses on bringing in volunteers who are experts in their field and generally have at least 10 years of work experience. They bring professional skills to build local capacity in health, education, and other sectors of civil society. Peace Corps Response was formally established in 1996 under the name Crisis Corps and to date over 1,500 Volunteers have served in more than 50 countries.

In January, Peace Corps Country Director Dr. Robert Reid signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Chuuk Gov. Johnson Elimo for a new initiative to bring Peace Corps Response Volunteers, technical specialists, to build capacity in education and disaster coordination efforts in Chuuk.

Five education accreditation experts will work with their counterparts at the Chuuk Department of Education to assist elementary and secondary schools to move toward accreditation. In addition, two curriculum development specialists will work with their Chuuk Department of Education counterparts. The Peace Corps Response Volunteer assigned to the Disaster Coordination Office will work with the DCO to enhance disaster risk reduction and response planning efforts.

Reid, along with Mason Fritz, Peace Corps Chuuk Volunteer Support Specialist, discussed this collaboration with Elimo and Kichy Joseph, and reassured them that the Peace Corps is committed to assisting the peoples of Chuuk in these program areas, as well as with other priorities.. In regard to the education reform efforts in Chuuk, Reid stated, "This visit to Chuuk has been helpful to understanding how the work of our specialists can assist the ongoing efforts of the CDOE to improve the quality of education for Chuukese students. I was impressed by the commitment of those Chuukese citizens involved in this reform process to ensure its success."

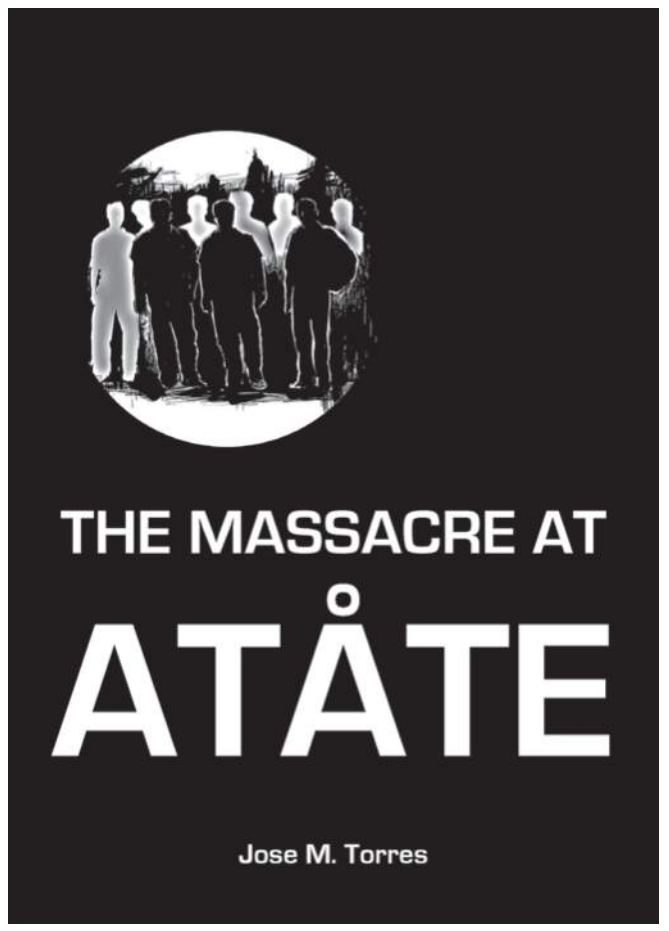
Elimo and Reid also agreed to jointly plan and commemorate, "as is our custom," the Peace Corps' 50th anniversary in Micronesia, which is coming up in 2016. "The close relationships our Volunteers have formed with the peoples of Chuuk are a great reason to have a large celebration," added Reid.

Additionally, the Peace Corps Country Director signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Chuuk Women's Council president Christina "Kiki" Stinnett to bring technical specialists to build capacity in health and NGO development. The first expert will work with the Chuuk Women's Council to build capacity in their health education efforts as well as to assist the CWC to move towards sustainable operations.

Reid and Fritz discussed this collaboration at the CWC office with Stinnett, affirming that the Peace Corps is committed to continuing assistance with priorities of the CWC. Reid toured the CWC office and saw the new apartment and office that have been prepared for the Peace Corps Response Volunteer. The Chuuk community, including the Truk Stop Hotel, have pitched in to help furnish the apartment and office. After the tour, Reid stated, "Our discussions with the leaders of the Chuuk Women's Council have energized our desire to commence collaboration with the CWC our specialists will greatly assist on-going initiatives to strengthen civil society in Chuuk. ***(U.S. Embassy Kolonia)***

'Massacre at Atåte': WWII resistance fighter releases memoir

»A survivor's story of a Chamorro uprising in the last days of the Japanese occupation of Guam



Jose M. Torres of Malesso' will have a book launch and signing for his new World War II memoir, *The Massacre at Atåte,* on Feb. 24, 2015, from 6:30pm to 8:30pm, at the University of Guam CLASS Lecture Hall. The memoir is published by the Micronesia Area Research Center with the Chamorro Studies Program. The event is free and open to the public, and refreshments will be served.

The book launch will include a reading from the book and presentation by Torres as well as a panel discussion with the author, UOG president Dr. Robert Underwood, and Chamorro Studies program director Dr. Michael Lujan Bevacqua. *The Massacre at Atåte* will be available for purchase, and the author will be available to sign copies and meet with the public.

Underwood wrote the introduction to the memoir, and Bevacqua wrote a scholarly essay on the historic import of the uprising at Atåte, which is included with the memoir.

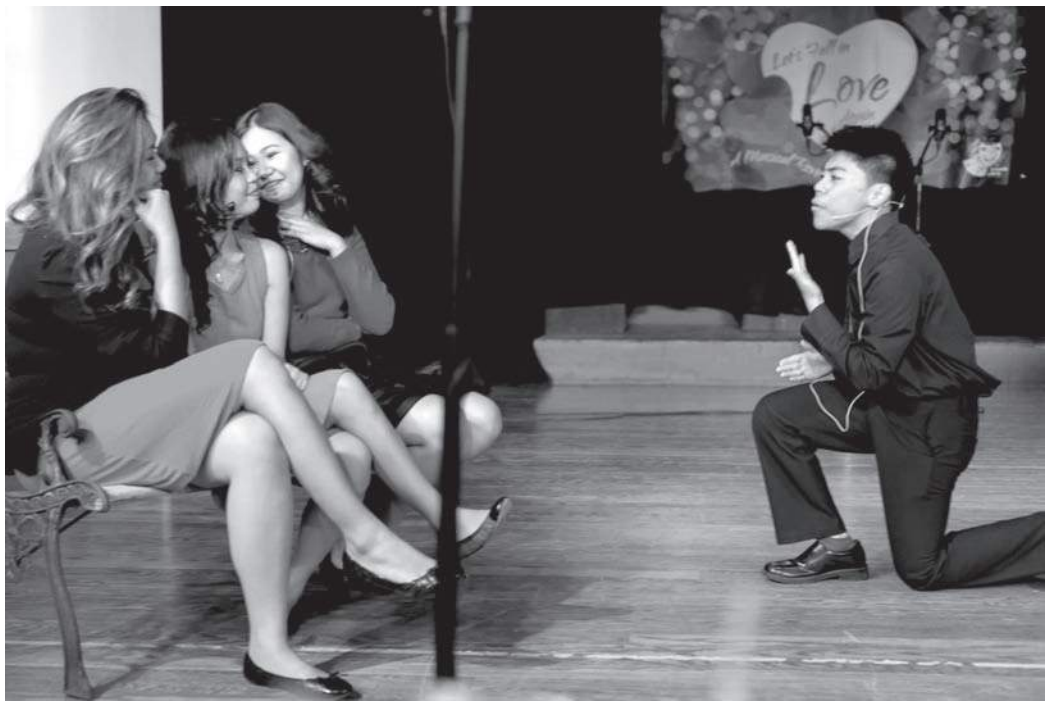
About the memoir

Jose M. Torres was part of an uprising against the Japanese occupiers in the closing days of World War II, with American bombs dropping around the island and Chamorros being herded into concentration camps. The Japanese had committed two brutal massacres in the southern village of Malesso' (Merizo), killing 46 Chamorro men and women at the sites of Tinta and Faha.

Hearing of the threat of yet another massacre, Jose "Tonko" Reyes organized an uprising of men from the village. Although very young, Torres joined the group also. In broad daylight, these Mighty Men of Malesso', with almost no weapons except one rifle, launched a brave attack on the Japanese occupiers, killing most of them in personal combat. They liberated themselves and their families and village.

A group of six, including Torres, sailed to find help and discovered a U.S. fleet on the western coast. They provided military intelligence on Japanese defenses and reported on the situation of the Chamorro people.

This book is a groundbreaking memoir of a young man during war time, caught up in one of the most exciting and—until now—largely forgotten moments in Guam's World War II history. ***(UOG)***



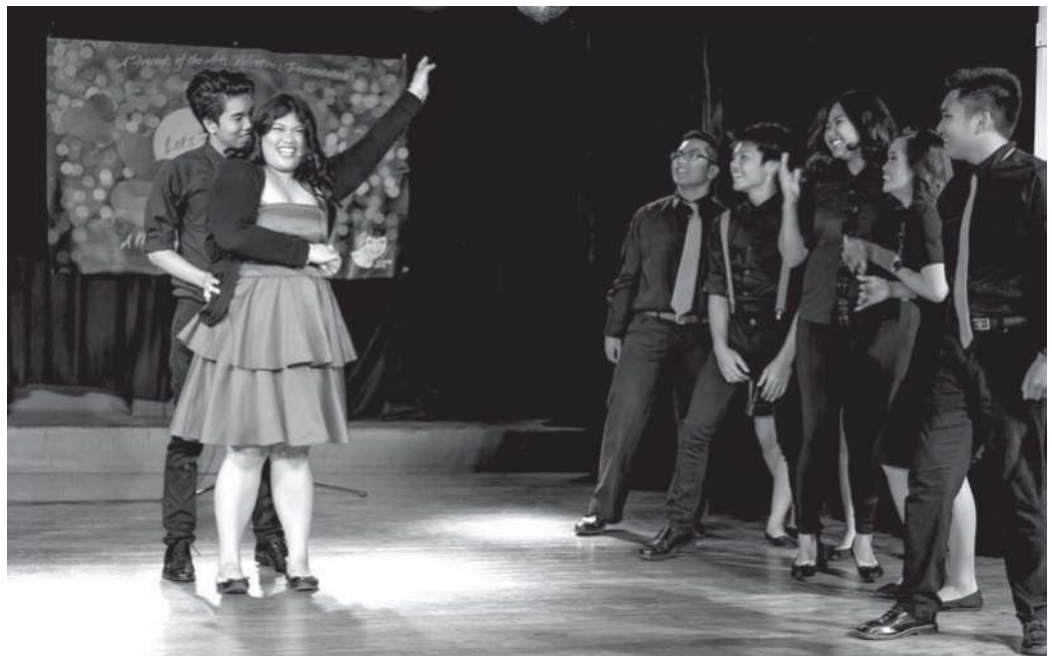
Photos by LESLIE REYES

FOA musical revue explores myriad forms of love

Friends of the Arts presented three performances of its special annual Valentine's Day program "Let's Fall in Love Again" on Feb. 12, 14, and 15 at the Charley's Cabaret of the Pacific Islands Club Saipan.

The third program of its 2015 season, Let's Fall in Love Again is a musical revue that consists of songs taken from different Broadway shows: *Cabaret, Cinderella, Grease, Color Purple, How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, Jersey Boys, Love Never Dies, Les Miserables, The Little Mermaid, Hair Spray, The Last Five Years, The Addams Family, Jekyll and Hyde, Wonderland, Promises Promises,* and others.

The songs depict different scenarios of people falling in and out of love. The show starts with a song in contradiction to the theme, "I'll Never Fall in Love Again." It continues to show reasons why some people find it hard to fall in love. After which, it takes it from the beginning of a love story—the infatuation stage—to conflicts in a relationship and love from different kinds of people and characters.



Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Agreement on Ukraine could vindicate use of economic sanctions

Assuming it doesn't unravel—a big assumption—the agreement on the future of Ukraine announced last week is preferable to the continuation of a conflict in which 5,000 people have died and nearly a million have been displaced. The deal, negotiated by Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany, calls for a "comprehensive" cease-fire and envisions a political settlement that would preserve Ukraine's territorial integrity while granting some autonomy to pro-Russian regions of the country.

The U.S. welcomed the agreement, but Secretary of State John F. Kerry reiterated that sanctions against Russia would be lifted only after fulfillment of the agreement's terms including, he said, "a full cease-fire, the withdrawal of all foreign troops and equipment from Ukraine, the full restoration of Ukrainian control of the international border and the release of all hostages." For now, at least, the agreement spares President Barack Obama a decision on whether he should supply Ukraine with defensive weapons. He can reconsider that if the agreement fails and Russia resumes its assistance to Ukrainian separatists.

It's crucial that all parties to this agreement abide by its provisions, which also include the withdrawal of heavy weapons, amnesty for separatists and new political arrangements, beginning with interim self-rule for areas in Donetsk and Luhansk. From the standpoint of Ukraine's sovereignty, the most important provision is the requirement that foreign troops be withdrawn. Bizarrely, Russia agreed to this provision even as it continued to maintain that its forces never crossed into Ukraine.

Even if this agreement succeeds, questions will linger about whether Russian President Vladimir Putin's policy of meddling in Russia's "near abroad" has been a success. In one sense, the answer is clearly yes. Russia succeeded in annexing Crimea. But that territory, which was part of Russia until 1954, is viewed as a special case even by the Western governments that condemned its annexation. Russia's interference in eastern Ukraine has been seen as more ominous and a possible precedent for a campaign to "protect" Russian speakers elsewhere.

If Russia is now willing to cease its military subversion in Ukraine in exchange for autonomy for pro-Russian regions, that's a positive development. It is also, arguably, a vindication of economic sanctions. But, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel said, the agreement offers a "glimmer of hope," not a guarantee, that this conflict will be resolved peacefully.

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WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NOW? I GET ALL MY NEWS FROM JON STEWART!
I KNOW THE FEELING... I GET ALL MY NEWS FROM BRIAN WILLIAMS.
OMAHA WORLD-HERALD
ROBERDA

Obama's sadder but wiser foreign policy

By DOYLE MCMANUS
Los Angeles Times

Doyle McManus is a columnist for The Los Angeles Times. *Readers may send him email at doyle.mcmanus@latimes.com*

When he entered the White House in 2009, Barack Obama had grand ambitions in foreign policy. He planned to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, build a better relationship with Russia, broker peace between Israel and the Palestinians and offer a hand of friendship to Iran and the Muslim world.

Six years later, the president, and the rest of us, are sadder but wiser. American troops are still in Afghanistan and back in Iraq, although in much smaller numbers and not in ground combat. The "reset" with Russia and prospects for peace in the Middle East are little more than wistful memories.

So when the White House published the second-term edition of its national security strategy last week, one of its goals was simply to catch up with those new realities, and to reassert that the United States has no choice but to stay engaged.

"The question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead," the president wrote in his preface to the 29-page manifesto.

There's a lot of leadership in the pages that follow—a series of rebuttals, in effect, to Republican critics who charge that Obama isn't leading and doesn't want to.

"We will lead with purpose," the document says. "We will lead with strength. ... We will lead by example."

We will lead every way we can, it seems, except one: We won't lead from behind. (That phrase, used accurately but incautiously by a White House aide during the U.S.-led war in Libya, has long since been retired.)

And it's true that the Obama administration has been leading: in the war against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, in the nuclear negotiations with Iran, and (with Germany and France) in the campaign to stop Russia from conquering more of Ukraine.

That's why it was interesting that Obama himself, in a long interview the online magazine Vox published this week, chose to emphasize a different theme: not leadership, but lower expectations.

Yes, he said, the U.S. will still be "the indispensable nation for the rest of this century, just like it was for the last one." But the president's main point was that even a superpower with strong allies can sometimes make only a modest difference in an increasingly disorderly world.

"You take the victories where you can. You make things a little bit better rather than a little bit worse," Obama said. "And that's in no way a concession to this idea that America is withdrawing," Obama said, "or there's not much we can do. It's just a realistic assessment of how the world works."

Take the Middle East. "I came in with some very clear theories about what my goals were going to be," Obama said. "And then the Arab Spring happened." Now, he said, he'd be glad just to see some "movement toward greater stability."

Obama's national security advisor, Susan Rice, echoed the theme, calling for "strategic patience." That's another way of describing the limits of U.S. power, a warning that problems like Islamic extremism will take a generation to abate.

"Too often what's missing here in Washington is a sense of perspective," said Rice.

"While the dangers we face may be more numerous and varied, they are not of the existential nature we confronted during World War II or the Cold War," she said.

In other words, things aren't as bad as they look. So could you please cut us some slack?

She has a point. The terrorists of Islamic State aren't a direct threat to the United States—so far, at least. Iran's nuclear program is in effect frozen. Russia is threatening Ukraine, but it's no longer a global menace.

But for Obama, the main foreign policy lesson is still the one he campaigned on in 2008: U.S. power should be used sparingly.

"The real challenge for the country—not just during my presidency but in future presidencies—is recognizing that leading does not always mean occupying ... and that American leadership means wherever possible leveraging other countries, other resources," he told Vox.

Even though his new national security framework includes a daunting list of threats (it ranks climate change and epidemics alongside nuclear proliferation and terrorism) and national interests (including not only democracy but also, for the first time, the human rights of LGBT people), the main point the president wants to make was about the limits on American power.

That will disappoint both conservative and liberal interventionists, who want to see Obama intervene more vigorously in Syria or send weapons to the government of Ukraine. His implicit answer: Still not interested.

The traditional word for that vein of foreign policy thinking is realism: Making sure our goals don't outstrip our means.

With two years to run, Obama does have a foreign policy strategy—or, at least, a compendium of threats and goals. As he enters the last chapter of his presidency, he and his aides are inevitably thinking ahead to what their legacy will be.

Their message to history's referees last week was: Lower your expectations.

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Obama's 'lead from behind' security strategy will plague America for decades

By JOHN BOLTON
Los Angeles Times

John Bolton, former U.S. ambassador to the U.N., is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. He wrote this for the Los Angeles Times.

Any administration's national security strategy written for public consumption inevitably involves platitudes, vacuous rhetoric and self-congratulation. But the strategy announced last week for President Barack Obama's final two years in office sets new records in all these categories. As a sleep aid, it cannot be underestimated. Indeed, diverting attention from America's rapidly deteriorating global strategic posture was likely a prime objective, as were his answers at Monday's news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

In her defense of the strategy, National Security Adviser Susan Rice criticized "alarmism" by Obama's critics, arguing in a speech that we do not face "existential" threats as we did in World War II and the Cold War. That's true, but no thanks to Obama's policies, which have weakened the United States and in coming years will encourage aggressors rather than deter them. The president fails to grasp that the function of statecraft is precisely to be alert to small threats and crises, and to prevent them from growing to existential levels.

Obama's national security strategy is most noteworthy for its detachment from reality. In a personal introduction, the president preens about reducing American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan from approximately 180,000 in 2009 to roughly 15,000 today. Then, ironically echoing his predecessor, he asserts that we are "leading over 60 partners in a global campaign to degrade and ultimately defeat" Islamic State. Left unsaid is that Iraq has collapsed as a viable state, and that Islamic State, a threat equal to or worse than al-Qaida, now controls large portions of Iraq's territory. What is left over is an Iranian vassal. The prognosis for Afghanistan is little better.

These debacles are presented as achievements. In fact, I believe Islamic State would fall swiftly in the face of strong military measures and political efforts to divorce Sunni Arabs in Iraq and Syria from its sway. Instead, Iraq is devolving into a new terrorist state, as other countries in the region, from Libya to Yemen, descend into chaos and anarchy.

Obama claims we are "in lockstep with our European allies" in opposing Russian aggression in Ukraine, but Merkel and French President Francois Hollande are actively negotiating with Moscow, while Washington appears to be sidelined. Meanwhile, NATO is badly divided over whether to provide Kiev military aid.

Nonetheless, Obama writes that "the question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead." His truly Orwellian notion that "leading from behind" is actually leadership would warm Big Brother's heart. Sadly, our global adversaries are not deceived.

The security strategy's detachment from reality is most egregiously displayed in its discussion of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and specifically Iran's nuclear-weapons program. Obama is proud he is reducing America's nuclear capabilities, even as he admits that threats posed by "irresponsible states or terrorists" using nuclear weapons are the gravest America faces. Unfortunately, the idea that diminished U.S. capabilities will in some way induce those "irresponsible states or terrorists" to modify their own behavior seems chilling and palpably inaccurate. Surely, a weaker America is an incentive to the irresponsible, including states like Russia and China, not a model.

On Iran, Obama says that the 2013 "interim" deal (agreed to by the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members and Germany) "has halted the progress of Iran's program." This is flatly untrue and as a basis for policy, it almost certainly obscures a growing "existential" threat for America and our allies. It assumes we know everything about Iran's nuclear-weapons program, which is a dramatically unrealistic characterization for both the extent of, and our confidence in, the information we actually possess.

There is simply no evidence that Iran has done anything other than make temporary, easily reversible concessions regarding uranium already enriched to reactor-grade levels. Nothing in the interim agreement even addresses the likelihood of Iran's efforts to weaponize highly enriched uranium and to develop a plutonium nuclear-weapon option. Nor does the agreement curtail its missile development program. The missile work of Iran's partner, North Korea, has already led U.S. and South Korean commanders to warn that targeting America's West Coast is within Pyongyang's reach.

Even more fundamentally, Obama's security strategy fails to acknowledge that recognizing an Iranian "right" to enrichment reverses the most basic premise of more than a decade of negotiation with Iran begun in 2003 by Britain, France and Germany. From 2003 until Obama, the West agreed that Iran had to forgo unconditionally all enrichment-related activity to assure the world its program was entirely peaceful. Obama's retreat on this critical point is comparable to the "existential" mistakes made by Western appeasers in the 1930s.

Like its bureaucratic predecessors from every administration, the 2015 national security strategy will soon lie forgotten on dusty shelves. Unfortunately, however, Obama's ongoing, accelerating failures will bedevil America for decades to come.

With drug addicts, a helping hand is best

By ANNE MICHAUD
Newsday

Anne Michaud is interactive editor for Newsday Opinion *and a member of the* Newsday *editorial board. Readers may send her email at anne.michaud@newsday.com.*

Almost everything we have been told about addiction is wrong, according to a new book from British journalist and author Johann Hari. His argument is so persuasive that we might end up rethinking imprisonment for addicts, along with confronting them in the all-or-nothing interventions popular on reality TV.

The first bad information, Hari argues, is that there are strong chemical hooks in drugs that cause our bodies to crave a substance. That's quite a claim, given evidence that drug users go through physical withdrawal after quitting.

Hari points to two experiments. One involved a rat in a cage with two water bottles. One bottle held just water, and the other held water laced with heroin or cocaine. Almost every time, the rat became obsessed with the drugged water and kept drinking it until it killed him. This is where the chemical hooks theory began.

But a Canadian psychology professor named Bruce Alexander tried something different. He built a "rat park": a lavish cage where rats had toys and tunnels, delicious food and plenty of company.

Again, the two water bottles were on offer. But these rats didn't consume the drugged water like the isolated rats. Alexander believes it's because they had good lives. None died from drug abuse. Rats that got hooked in isolation and were moved to the park soon stopped their heavy use.

Wouldn't it be great if we had a similar experiment to teach us about addiction in humans? Hari argues that we did: the Vietnam War. Some 20 percent of U.S. soldiers became addicted to heroin, he says, and when they came home, 95 percent simply stopped—without rehab.

The soldiers had been transplanted out of a horror show, and it made all the difference in their drug habits.

Such evidence should bolster skepticism about the war on drugs, in which we often jail addicts, isolating them. Also, tough-love strategies—cutting off contact with a drug abuser or kicking her out of the house—are exactly opposite of what's suggested by Hari's book "Chasing the Scream."

Of course, loved ones must set some terms about illegal or disruptive behavior. But ongoing connection and a hand extended to help are the best approach with an addict you love, exhausting and heartbreaking though it may be.

After I read "Chasing the Scream," I began to see evidence of this everywhere.

Addiction therapist Frederick Woolverton writes about working at a Baldwin community clinic in the 1980s and realizing he was using cigarettes the same way his patient was using vodka: to soothe himself so he could better function with his wife, family and in social settings.

"Instead of dealing directly with old feelings of distress and loneliness, I was reaching for an escape to keep the negative and painful emotions at bay," he wrote in 2012 in "Unhooked: How to Quit Anything." "That behavior only exacerbated my emptiness and encouraged more escapist habits like eating poorly, not exercising, and being a workaholic."

After quitting his 23-year pack-a-day habit, Woolverton teaches addicts to find healthy "core pillars," or people they can lean on for support in recovery.

Poignantly, this insight drove Msgr. William O'Brien to found Daytop Village in upstate Rhinebeck as long ago as 1963—before tough love became more dominant. Daytop, which now has an international reach, creates supportive emotional communities. O'Brien said addiction is a failure of the modern family. He believed drugs were self-medication to block out the pain at home.

That's a harsh diagnosis. I'm sure addiction tempts people in loving homes, too. But as a dose of prevention, we should make our human rat parks as warm and welcoming as possible.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CHCC needs a true policymaking board

Five years ago, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation Act was signed into law (Public Law 16-51). Aside from the serious financial and budgetary difficulties that the new government corporation has encountered since, CHCC also has a fundamental corporate problem: a board of trustees that is merely advisory in nature and therefore has no policy-making authority. The chief executive officer and top management officials are not answerable to the CHCC board of trustees. Indeed, the CEO is answerable only to the governor, making the CHCC a corporation in name only. Otherwise, it is still a "line-department" in practice.

I simply cannot understand why the Legislature saw fit to pass the CHCC law five years ago with an "advisory" board of trustees that has no teeth or power. Indeed, in view of the inability of the present CEO and board of trustees to work together and to get along, we can only surmise that any "advice" given by the board of trustees to the CEO will be thrown out the window. Is this the way we want public health service to be administered in the Commonwealth? Of course not.

Of all the government corporations in the Commonwealth, CHCC, I believe, is the only one with an advisory board. All the others—CPA, CDA CUC, NMC, to name several—have a board of directors/trustees/regents that is responsible for running their respective government corporations, and to whom the CEO is answerable to. And this is the normal way of running a corporation—with a governing board of directors/trustees.

I wish to add that an underlying problem affecting many CNMI government boards and instrumentalities is not the matter of having a board of directors/trustees to oversee and run the government corporation. This is the problem of having a board of directors whose members are composed of political appointees and who have very little or no idea how to run the corporation they are appointed to. Another problem is having a "rubber stamp" board. This is where a board of directors will not make a decision on behalf of the corporation until the board members first find out what the governor's position is on a matter to be acted upon by the board. This makes the board indecisive and useless.

It seems to me that when a governor appoints individuals to serve on government boards, he does so because he has trust and confidence in their individual ability and competence. He trusts that his appointees will use their best judgment on matters coming before the corporation and that their decision will benefit the public. If the governor, however, wants his appointees to follow his personal bidding, then he might as well have the corporation become a line department of the government.

It also seems to me that if the Commonwealth is to begin maturing politically, then CNMI government leaders need to begin maturing politically and professionally. They need to start passing laws that will reflect the growth of such maturity; not laws where the governor and not the board makes the final decision on behalf of the government corporation, which is now the case with the present CHCC legislation.

Ensign Serafin!

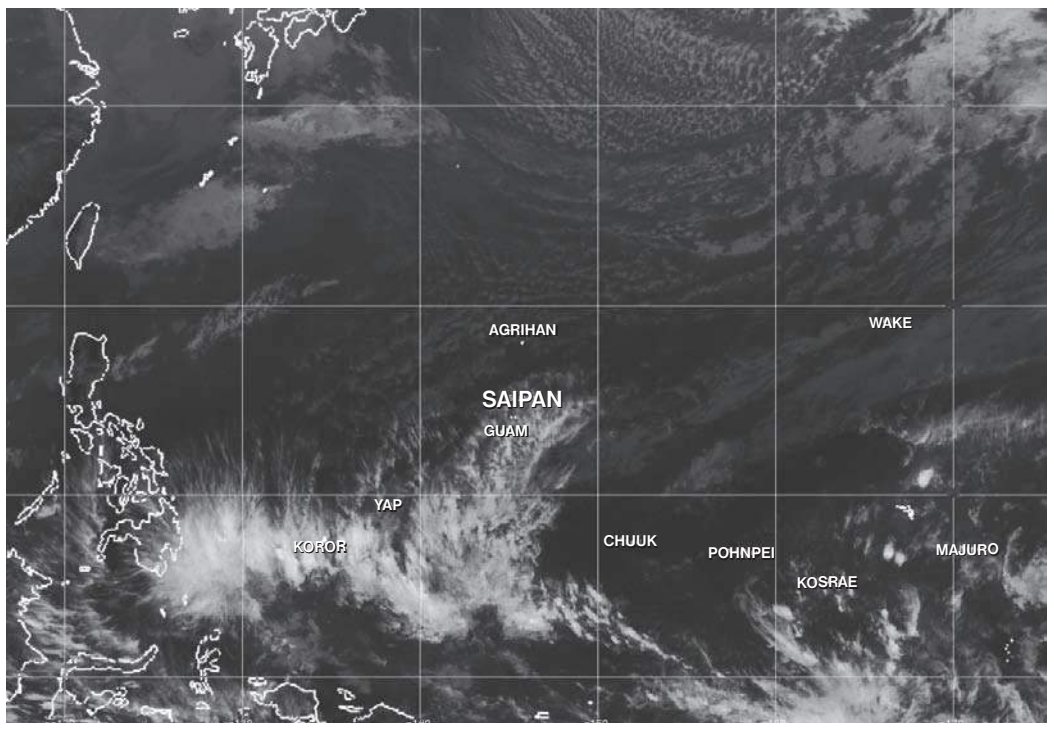
Alexandro 'The Colonel' Sablan
Dandan, Saipan

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Mostly sunny with a slight chance of showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲86º ▼75º	▲86º ▼75º	▲86º ▼75º	▲86º ▼75º	▲86º ▼75º

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2015

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends southwestward from 19N180E to southeast of Wake Island at 16N170E then continues as a stationary front to end northeast of Chuuk near 9N154E. Clouds and patchy showers are present along and up to 150 miles northwest of this boundary. A near-equatorial trough runs southeastward from 4N130E through a weak circulation centered southwest of Chuuk near 2N148E to the equator and 152E. A shear line stretches southwestward from 11N153E to east of Koror at 6N136E These features are combining to produce scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms across Yap state and the republic of Palau between 10N and 2N from 130E to 149E. A surface trough extends southwestward from 12N171E to EQ164E. Scattered showers are occurring north of the Marshall Islands between 14N and 9N from 167E to 176E. Low-level convergence east of the trough is generating scattered showers southeast of Majuro between 7N and 3N from 174E to 178E.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

Micronesia

Guam And Rota	Partly Cloudy	▲83	▼73
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼75
Yap	Mostly Cloudy	▲85	▼77
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	▲84	▼78
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	▲86	▼77
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	▲83	▼80
Majuro	Thunderstorms	▲84	▼80

Around the Globe

Auckland	Showers	▲74	▼61
Beijing	Sunny	▲54	▼27
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	▲71	▼61
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	▲84	▼69
London	Rain	▲48	▼33
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲75	▼54
Manila	Partly Cloudy	▲89	▼72
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	▲73	▼62
Miami	Partly Cloudy	▲75	▼67
New York	Mostly Sunny	▲24	▼16
Osaka	Showers	▲53	▼40
Paris	Cloudy	▲49	▼36
Pusan	Sunny	▲53	▼30
Rome	Partly Cloudy	▲58	▼45
Salem	Partly Cloudy	▲64	▼43
San Francisco	Sunny	▲52	▼30
Seoul	Snow	▲45	▼28
Tokyo	Showers	▲49	▼39
Washington, DC	Snow	▲26	▼20

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Tides

Saipan Harbor

12:09 AM	Today	Low Tide:	-0.3 Feet
7:02 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.9 Feet
12:31 PM	Today	Low Tide:	1.0 Feet
5:48 PM	Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:41 AM	6:22 PM
Wednesday	6:41 AM	6:22 PM
Thursday	6:40 AM	6:23 PM
Friday	6:40 AM	6:23 PM
Saturday	6:39 AM	6:23 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	4:40 AM	4:33 AM
Wednesday	5:36 AM	5:36 AM
Thursday	6:29 AM	6:39 PM
Friday	7:21 AM	7:41 PM
Saturday	8:11 AM	8:42 PM

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 5, 2015

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA5070	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA5068	8:00am	8:50am	3
UA5068	8:40am	9:30am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	2:20pm	4:00pm	6, 7 via Rota
UA5078	3:10pm	4:00pm	1, 5
UA5038	3:10pm	4:00pm	2, 4
UA5040	6:55pm	7:45pm	1, 5
UA5078	8:35pm	9:25pm	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA5044	10:40pm	11:30pm	1, 5

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA5039	2:20pm	2:55pm	6, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA5039	3:25pm	4:00pm	6, 7

SAIPAN-PALAU (ROR)

DL287	6:05am	1:10am+1	2, 6 via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL287	6:05am	8:40am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
DL297	4:20pm	7:05pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ606	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ606	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ6063	3:20am	7:10am	3, 4, 6, 7
OZ604	3:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
7C 3401	4:30pm	8:20pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:00am	8:35am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	5:30am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:30am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ606/701	2:10am	11:15am	1 via ICN
OZ606/701	2:40am	11:15am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5069/PR111	2:45am	4:50pm	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5070/191	4:15am	7:20am	2, 7 via GUM
UA5070/191	4:15am	9:00am	3, 6 via GUM
UA5070/183	4:15am	8:45pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA5070/183	4:15am	9:10pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
DL287/275	6:05am	9:35pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 6 via NRT
UA5071/PR111	6:40am	4:50pm	3 via GUM
UA5071/PR111	7:15am	4:50pm	1, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:00am	9:50pm	3 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:40am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:40am	9:50pm	1, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5039/183	2:20pm	9:50pm	6, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA5038/183	3:10pm	9:30pm	2 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	9:30pm	5 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	9:50pm	1 via GUM
UA5038/183	3:10pm	9:50pm	4 via GUM
OZ604/703	3:20pm	11:00pm	Daily via ICN

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

OZ606/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ606/723	2:10am	12:50pm	1 via ICN
OZ606/721	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/723	2:40am	12:50pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5070/179	4:15am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA5068/179	8:00am	10:35pm	3 via GUM
UA5068/179	8:40am	10:35pm	1, 5, 6 via GUM
UA5039/179	2:20pm	10:35pm	6 via Rota-GUM
UA5078/179	3:10pm	10:35pm	1, 5 via GUM
OZ604/749	3:20pm	10:30pm	Daily via ICN

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA5069	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA5071	6:40am	7:30am	3
UA5071	7:15am	8:05am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	1:00pm	1:50pm	6, 7
UA5038	1:10pm	2:40pm	2, 4 via Rota
UA5077	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 5
UA5041	5:35pm	6:25pm	1, 5
UA5077	7:15pm	8:05pm	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA5043	9:20pm	10:10pm	1, 5

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA5038	1:00pm	1:35pm	2, 4

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA5038	2:05pm	2:40pm	2, 4

PALAU (ROR)-SAIPAN

DL298	4:35am	3:00pm	3, 7 via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:25am	3:00pm	Daily
DL288	8:55pm	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ603	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
7C 3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ605	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ605	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
OZ6053	8:50pm	2:10am+1	2, 3, 5, 6

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	1:50am+1	3, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:30pm	4:30am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:30pm	12:30am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:55pm	3:10am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ704/603	12:10am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
PR110/UA5041	7:35am	6:25pm	1,5 via GUM
PR110/UA5077	7:35am	8:05pm	3, 6, 7 via GUM
PR110/UA5043	7:35am	10:10pm	1, 5 via GUM
DL172/288	9:40am	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7 via NRT
UA190/5077	9:55am	8:05pm	2, 7 via GUM
UA190/5077	10:00am	8:05pm	3, 6 via GUM
OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA184/5071	10:55pm	7:30am+1	3 via GUM
UA184/5071	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5039	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5038	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	4 via GUM-Rota
UA184/5077	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5041	10:55pm	6:25pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5077	10:55pm	8:05pm+1	3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5043	10:55pm	10:10pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5071	10:59pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/5038	10:59pm	2:40pm+1	2 via GUM-Rota
UA184/5077	10:59pm	2:40pm+1	5 via GUM
UA184/5041	10:59pm	6:25pm+1	5 via GUM
UA184/5077	10:59pm	8:05pm+1	2 via GUM
UA184/5043	10:59pm	10:10pm+1	5 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ746/603	12:30am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
OZ750/603	1:10am	2:20pm	Daiily via ICN
OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ724/605	2:20pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ724/605	2:20pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA180/5071	10:55pm	7:30am+1	3 via GUM
UA180/5071	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 5, 6 via GUM
UA180/5039	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	6 via GUM
UA180/5077	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	1, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA180/5041	10:55pm	6:25pm+1	1, 5 via GUM
UA180/5077	10:55pm	8:05pm+1	3, 6 via GUM
UA180/5043	10:55pm	10:10pm+1	1, 5 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju AirETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Mon, Tue,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

Business

Hackers steal up to $1B from banks, security co. says

By MAE ANDERSON
AP TECHNOLOGY WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—A hacking ring has stolen up to $1 billion from banks around the world in what would be one of the biggest banking breaches known, a cybersecurity firm says in a report scheduled to be delivered Monday.

The hackers have been active since at least the end of 2013 and infiltrated more than 100 banks in 30 countries, according to Russian security company Kaspersky Lab.

After gaining access to banks' computers through phishing schemes and other methods, they lurk for months to learn the banks' systems, taking screen shots and even video of employees using their computers, the company says.

AP

In this Jan. 20, 2015, Kwon Seok-chul, CEO at computer security firm Cuvepia Inc., presents "Kwon-ga," a real-time monitoring solution that detects hackers during an interview at his office in Seongnam, South Korea. Ever since the Internet blossomed in the 1990s, cybersecurity was built on the idea that computers could be protected by a digital quarantine.

Once the hackers become familiar with the banks' operations, they use that knowledge to steal money without raising suspicions, programming ATMs to dispense money at specific times or setting up fake accounts and transferring money into them, according to Kaspersky. The report is set to be presented Monday at a security conference in Cancun, Mexico. It was first reported by The New York Times.

The hackers seem to limit their theft to about $10 million before moving on to another bank, part of the reason why the fraud was not detected earlier, Kaspersky principal security researcher Vicente Diaz said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press.

The attacks are unusual because they target the banks themselves rather than customers and their account information, Diaz said.

The goal seems to be financial gain rather than espionage, he said.

"In this case they are not interested in information. They're only interested in the money," he said. "They're flexible and quite aggressive and use any tool they find useful for doing whatever they want to do."

Most of the targets have been in Russia, the U.S., Germany, China and Ukraine, although the attackers may be expanding throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, Kaspersky says. In one case, a bank lost $7.3 million through ATM fraud. In another case, a financial institution lost $10 million by the attackers exploiting its online banking platform.

Kaspersky did not identify the banks and is still working with law-enforcement agencies to investigate the attacks, which the company says are ongoing.

The Financial Services Information Sharing and Analysis Center, a nonprofit that alerts banks about hacking activity, said in a statement that its members received a briefing about the report in January.

"We cannot comment on individual actions our members have taken, but on balance we believe our members are taking appropriate actions to prevent and detect these kinds of attacks and minimize any effects on their customers," the organization said in a statement. "The report that Russian banks were the primary victims of these attacks may be a significant change in targeting strategy by Russian-speaking cybercriminals."

The White House is putting an increasing focus on cybersecurity in the wake of numerous data breaches of companies ranging from mass retailers like Target and Home Depot to Sony Pictures Entertainment and health insurer Anthem.

When working from home, strive to connect with co-workers

YOUR OFFICE COACH

By MARIE G. MCINTYRE
Tribune News Service

Marie G. McIntyre is a workplace coach and the author of "Secrets to Winning at Office Politics."

Q: Three years ago, after starting a family, I began working from home most of the time, spending only one day a week in the office. Although my manager approved this plan, he has never kept me informed about policy changes or other business developments. My co-workers communicate exclusively through texts and emails, so I never receive any phone calls.

Recently, my boss informed me that my performance is slipping. I have been reprimanded several times for making mistakes or missing deadlines. My manager used to be a supportive coach, but he now he just seems cold and critical. How can I improve when no one will communicate with me?

A: After being largely absent for three years, it's no wonder you feel disconnected. Based on your comments, however, you appear to have been passively waiting for others to keep you involved and informed. To get back on track, you must begin to assume personal responsibility for getting what you need.

As a first step, establish a regular schedule of meetings with your manager. During these discussions, you can request updates, clarify expectations, provide progress reports and request helpful coaching. In response to his recent criticisms, consider drafting an improvement plan with specific objectives.

To stay current with more informal happenings, develop the habit of inviting one or more co-workers to lunch on your office days. And if you need to converse with someone who avoids the phone, simply send an email to schedule a call.

Finally, if you plan to stay with this company, it may be time to increase your visibility. Show up for staff meetings, attend company functions, and add an extra office day from time to time. Although working from home provides wonderful benefits, the old saying "out of sight, out of mind" concisely sums up the risks.

Q: I recently applied for a job in another department. When the manager called to offer me the position, I explained that I couldn't accept immediately because I was waiting to hear about a possible opportunity with an outside company. Although she seemed to understand, the next day I received an email withdrawing the offer. I thought it was best to be truthful, but now I wonder if I said too much. What do you think?

A: Like many job applicants, you need to learn the difference between being honest and blabbing everything you know, think or feel. When you said "I'm waiting to hear about another opportunity", the hiring manager heard "Your position is my second choice." She then decided to hire someone who would be more excited about the job.

If you were to reenact this scenario, a truthful, but more circumspect, response might go something like this: "That's great! I'm so pleased to have been selected. I do have a few specific questions, but I'm pressed for time right now. Would it be possible for us to talk again tomorrow?"

You could then contact the other company and explain your predicament. If this produces an immediate offer, your problem is solved. But if not, you would still have the option of accepting the first one.

Flurry of sign-ups at health law deadline; web glitch fixed

WASHINGTON (AP)—After a computer glitch got patched up, supporters of President Barack Obama's health care law were out in force Sunday trying to get uninsured people signed up by the official deadline for 2015 coverage.

The effort had the trappings of a get-out-the-vote drive, with email reminders, telephone calls and squads of community-level volunteers.

"You can't avoid it: TV, radio, church, wife, kids, co-workers," said Ramiro Hernandez, a previously uninsured truck repair shop owner who enrolled himself and his family in Joliet, Illinois, on Saturday.

Technicians anxiously monitored the federal HealthCare.gov website for any new bugs. The administration provided no statistics on weekend sign-ups, instead releasing numbers that showed tens of thousands of consumers were trying to connect, online and by phone.

Winter weather interfered in parts of the country. Rhode Island's state-run insurance marketplace extended its deadline until Feb. 23. Blowing snow and bitter cold affected not only walk-in enrollment sites, but the state's call center as well. Online enrollment was still available.

New York, which is also running its own insurance market, announced a two-week extension for anyone who has already started an application.

Federal officials have said they, too, would allow extra time for people to finish in the 37 states served by HealthCare.gov. But officials have not said how long that grace period will be.

The health law offers subsidized private coverage to people without access to it on the job. Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell has set a nationwide target of 9.1 million people enrolled and paying premiums in 2015. Some experts say that's too modest. Nonpartisan congressional analysts have estimated 12 million people will sign up in the new insurance markets.

"Overall, we are really pleased with turnout," said John Gilbert, national field director for Enroll America, a nonprofit that works closely with the administration. "We expect that this will be a big number here at the end."

Schools start treating e-cigarettes as drug paraphernalia

RICHMOND, Va. (AP)—Some schools are getting tougher on e-cigarettes, even punishing possession of the devices more harshly than regular cigarettes.

The devices, which heat a nicotine solution to create a vapor instead of burning tobacco, have passed traditional smokes in popularity among teenagers. Schools are clamping down because e-cigarettes, sometimes also known as vaporizers, can also be used for illegal substances like marijuana.

Most schools have folded e-cigarettes into their anti-tobacco policies, which typically punish students with detention, a letter home and sometimes a tobacco education class.

But other schools in states including North Carolina, New Jersey, Washington and Connecticut, are grouping the devices in with bongs and pipes, meaning students could face long suspensions and required drug tests and have possession of drug paraphernalia marked on their school record.

"Our goal is to reduce access and discourage use on campus," said Sarah D'Annolfo, dean of students at The Taft School in Watertown, Connecticut. The co-ed boarding school amended its policy this school year to have e-cigarettes fall under its drug and alcohol policy. A disciplinary committee made up of faculty and students evaluate violations case-by-case, but they could result in a weeklong suspension and a mark on their record rather than a chat with the dean and school doctor and parental notification.

"It definitely sparks conversation within the school community about e-cigarette use and the possible dangers and the possible benefits," D'Annolfo said. "That conversation alone is a hugely important learning opportunity."

According to an annual government survey of more than 41,000 students, e-cigarettes have surpassed traditional smoking in popularity among teens.

Nation

Kayla Mueller's boyfriend describes effort to free her

PHOENIX (AP)—Kayla Mueller was in a detention cell in Syria, face to face with her boyfriend who was posing as her husband. Had she told her captors she was married to Omar Alkhani, she might have been freed from the hands of Islamic State militants, he said. Instead, she denied being his wife.

Alkhani had persuaded a string of people to let him plead for her release, but he left the room empty-handed and said he was thrown into another cell. He said he saw her face for just a few seconds when guards uncovered it to show it was Mueller.

The guards told Mueller, 26, that Alkhani would not be harmed if she told the truth, so she apparently stuck to honesty to save him rather than take the slim chance to save herself, he said.

"Since she's American, they would not let her go anyway. No sense to stay here, both of us," Alkhani said. "Maybe she wanted to save me. Maybe she didn't know I came back to save her."

Such was the nature of Mueller, the American hostage from Prescott who was content without new clothes, a hair dryer, makeup and much of the wages she earned as an international aid worker to help others.

Alkhani spoke to The Associated Press on Sunday via webcam from Turkey in one of his first interviews, detailing how he met Mueller in 2010 and the last time he saw her in 2013 as a prisoner of the Islamic State group.

AP
Palestinian demonstrators hold portraits of Kayla Mueller, a 26-year-old American who died while being held hostage by the Islamic State group, during a weekly demonstration against Israel's separation barrier in the West Bank village of Bilin near Ramallah, Friday, Feb. 13, 2015.

The U.S. government and Mueller's family confirmed her death last week. In the days since, hundreds of people have gathered to honor her in her hometown and in Flagstaff, where she attended Northern Arizona University.

Mueller and Alkhani were taken hostage in August 2013 after leaving a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Aleppo, Syria, where he was hired to fix the Internet connection. Mueller had begged him to let her tag along so she could see the suffering firsthand and help, despite the dangers of traveling into the war-torn region. He said he agreed reluctantly.

"We argued about it," he said. "In the end, I was afraid if she didn't go with me, she would go with someone else."

Mueller took advantage of an unexpected overnight stay at the hospital when the repairs took longer than expected and asked Syrian women about how they managed daily life. During what should have been a 10-minute trip to the bus station the next day, Mueller, Alkhani, the taxi driver and a fourth person were ambushed at gunpoint and threatened with death.

Mueller remained a hostage, while Alkhani was released a couple of months later after being beaten and interrogated about his work as a photographer, his religion and his relationship to Mueller, he said.

Against the advice of his friends, Alkhani said, he returned to Syria from Turkey later in 2013 to try to get back the woman he met three years earlier in Cairo after she responded to an advertisement he posted to house international visitors.

Mueller stayed less than a week in Cairo, but Alkhani said they quickly bonded and kept in touch through the Internet and traveled together, discussing ways they could change the world. They became a couple, and he said he promised her that he would always look out for her.

While she was in France learning the country's language to go to north Africa, Mueller encouraged Alkhani to follow his dream of helping fellow Syrians. She eventually joined him in Turkey near the Syrian border.

Alkhani said he spoke to her often about Syria, where bloodshed has gripped the country under the regime of embattled President Bashar Assad, and sent her recordings, photographs and other information that she used for her blog. Nearly half of Syria's population has been displaced, and some 200,000 people have died in the fighting.

"She wanted everyone to use their freedom to help us get freedom," he said.

When they were captured together and detained, Alkhani said he at least had some reassurance she was alive. He would cough or say something to make sure his voice was heard, and she sometimes would cough in return. Other times, he or his cellmates would peer under the door and see the sandals she was wearing, he said.

Alkhani said he was released after about 20 days, but he was told to forget about Mueller and his camera equipment.

Shooting suspect slams religion while defending liberty

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP)—If his Facebook page is any indication, Craig Hicks doesn't hate Muslims. An avowed atheist, his online posts instead depict a man who despises religion itself, but nevertheless seems to support an individual's right to his own beliefs.

"I hate Islam just as much as christianity, but they have the right to worship in this country just as much as any others do," the man now accused of killing three Muslim college students stated in one 2012 post over the proposed construction of a mosque near the World Trade Center site in New York.

Days after the shooting deaths of Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23; his wife, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, 21; and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19, a nuanced and sometimes contradictory portrait is emerging of the man charged in their slayings.

Police in Chapel Hill said they have yet to uncover any evidence that Hicks, 46, allegedly acted out of religious animus, though they are investigating the possibility. As a potential motive, they cited a dispute over parking spaces at the condo community where Hicks and two of the victims lived.

Hicks' court-appointed lawyer, Stephen Freedman, said he could not comment on the case. Hicks was being held without bond.

In often publicly posted Facebook rants, Hicks was brazen about his disdain for all faiths. In one post regarding specific texts from the Quran, the Jewish Talmud and the Bible about battling nonbelievers, he wrote: "I wish they would exterminate each other!"

But he was just as passionate about personal freedom and liberty—championing an individual's right to worship or not worship, legal abortion and gay marriage and, perhaps most fervently, the right to own and bear arms. If he has a creed, it's the Second Amendment.

"I guess after the horrible tragedy early this week in Arizona, all Glock pistols will officially be labeled `assault weapons,'" he wrote following the January 2011 assassination attempt on U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. "While I never cared for Glocks personally, it stinks that anyone would blame a firearm rather than the operator of such firearm for such a terrible act. I think I'll start blaming McDonalds for my weight problem, Christianity for the Ku Klux Klan, and Islam for terrorism."

One post included a photo of a revolver and the warning: "If you are anti-gun, defriend me NOW!!!"

Alabama gay marriage fight echoes states' rights battles

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP)—Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore's judicial building office overlooks Montgomery's Dexter Avenue, a history-soaked thoroughfare topped by the Alabama Capitol where Jefferson Davis was inaugurated president of the Confederacy and where the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. ended the 1965 march for voting rights.

As gay and lesbian couples left a nearby courthouse clutching marriage licenses last week, Moore, an outspoken critic of gay marriage, was fighting to stop the weddings using a states' rights argument that conjured up those historical ghosts of slavery, the Civil War and the battle against desegregation.

There has been resistance in other states to the tide of rulings allowing gay marriage. Some Florida clerks' offices scrapped all marriage ceremonies rather than perform same-sex unions. In South Carolina and Georgia, legislation is being developed to let individual employees opt out of issuing marriage licenses to gay couples out of sincere religious belief.

No state, however, went as far as Alabama, where the 68-year-old Moore instructed the state's probate judges not to issue marriage licenses to gay couples.

"It's my duty to speak up when I see the jurisdiction of our courts being intruded by unlawful federal authority," Moore said.

Moore objected to a Jan. 23 ruling by U.S. District Judge Callie Granade in Mobile that Alabama's gay marriage ban violates the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection and due process. After the Supreme Court on Feb. 9 refused to stay the decision, Alabama became the 37th state—plus the District of Columbia—where gays and lesbians can legally wed.

In his dissent when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to block that order, Justice Clarence Thomas pointedly raised the states' rights flag, complaining that the court's decision was made "without any regard for the people who approved these laws in popular referendums or elected the representatives who voted for them."

The decision, he added, "represents yet another example of this court's increasingly cavalier attitude toward the states."

Moore, who is head of the Alabama court system, threw the Granade ruling into disarray when he urged the probate judges in a letter to stand against "judicial tyranny" and claims Granade had no authority to "redefine marriage."

Alabama probate judges were not defendants in the case, Moore argues, and thus are not subject to a direct court order. He also said they are part of a parallel state court system that doesn't have to submit to Granade's views until the U.S. Supreme Court says otherwise.

ACROSS THE NATION

Surveyors determine new height for Washington Monument in DC

WASHINGTON (AP)—Government surveyors have determined a new height for the Washington Monument that's nearly 10 inches shorter than what has been thought for more than 130 years, officials will announce Monday. The new measurement puts the monument at 554 feet, 7 and eleven-thirty-seconds of an inch, as measured from the floor of the main entrance to the top. Ever since the stone obelisk was completed in 1884, however, the historic height has been recorded at 555 feet, 5 and 1/8 inches. It's a number circulated for decades on tours of the capital and in civics classes about the monument honoring the nation's first president. So could this be a case of an incredible shrinking monument? Has it sunk into the ground more than previously thought? No, not even close, said the chief scientist at the National Geodetic Survey, which conducted the measurement with accuracy to within one millimeter.

Woman stung by scorpion on flight from LA to Portland

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A scorpion stung a woman on the hand just before her flight from Los Angeles to Portland took off. Flight 567 was taxiing on the runway Saturday night when the passenger was stung, Alaska Airlines spokesman Cole Cosgrove said. The plane returned to the gate, and the woman was checked by medics. She refused additional medical treatment, but she didn't get back on the plane. The woman stomped the scorpion to death, and flight attendants checked overhead compartments for any additional unwanted arachnids, Cosgrove said. It's unclear how the scorpion got on the plane, but the flight originated in Los Cabos, Mexico, where scorpions are common, he said.

Authorities investigating triple homicide in Kentucky

CORBIN, Ky. (AP)—A 16-year-old boy killed in a shootout Saturday with police in Maryland prompted the search of his home over 500 miles away in Kentucky, where authorities found the bodies of his parents and younger sister. Friends and relatives of Jason Hendrix were struggling to understand how the boy, a faithful churchgoer who was baptized just two months ago, could end up as the suspect in the slayings. Hendrix, a Kentucky high school ROTC student and active church member, was angry at his parents for taking away his computer privileges when he's suspected of killing his family execution-style before fleeing to Maryland, where he died in a shootout with police, the town's police chief said Sunday.

Asia

Japan says economy grew 2.2 pct in Oct-Dec as exports jumped

TOKYO (AP)—Japan's economy emerged from recession in the last quarter, growing at a 2.2 percent annualized rate as exports and public spending helped to offset weaker residential investment.

However, the preliminary data released Monday put growth for the world's third-largest economy in 2014 flat at 0.0 percent, the slowest rate in three years, while real wages fell 0.1 percent.

The economy expanded 0.6 percent in October-December from the previous quarter, a rate that fell below many economists' expectations.

Private investment that remained anemic, suggesting that businesses and households, which account for the lion's share of growth, remain cautious about spending.

"The weakness in domestic demand supports our view that output will essentially be flat this year," Marcel Thieliant of Capital Economics said in a commentary.

The government revised earlier growth figures, suggesting the technical recession of two straight months of contraction was milder than earlier reported.

AP

In this Aug. 20, 2014 file photo, a port worker walks past a piles of cargo at a container terminal in Tokyo. Japan's economy grew at a 2.2 percent clip in the last quarter on a sharp recovery in exports.

The economy suffered two straight quarters of contraction following a sales tax hike in April, prompting Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to push back until April 2017 a tax hike planned for October of this year.

The economy contracted at a minus 0.6 percent pace in July-September, Monday's data showed, compared to the earlier reported minus 1.9 percent pace. The contraction in April-July was revised upward from minus 7.3 percent to minus 1.7 percent.

Many economists had forecast an exit from recession in the October-December quarter thanks partly to stronger demand in the U.S., Japan's largest export market.

Abe has sought to foster sustained growth through massive injections of cash into the economy, primarily through central bank asset purchases similar to those used in the U.S. under the Federal Reserve's quantitative easing policy.

The ultra-loose monetary policy is meant to spur inflation and counter years of deflationary stagnation, but so far Japan remains far short of the government and central bank's target of 2 percent.

More than two years into his administration, Abe is struggling to get growth back on a sustainable path and make a "new start."

In a major policy speech last week, he vowed to push through the biggest reforms in Japan since World War II, reiterating pledges for sweeping reforms of the government bureaucracy, labor regulations and other policies to catalyze growth.

"Now is the time. Through our efforts, Japan can achieve growth once again," he said.

Sustained growth will depend both on global trends and on whether consumer spending can regain momentum. Abe and other leaders are pushing corporations to raise wages in this year's spring labor negotiations to help boost consumer demand.

Last year major corporations like Toyota Motor Corp. gave the largest wage increases in years. Part-time workers have likewise seen some increases. But overall incomes lagged behind inflation as the sales tax rose to 8 percent from 5 percent.

The more than 60 percent plunge in oil prices since June is cooling inflation around the globe, but is also seen as a plus for consumer spending since lower costs for gas and other energy can mean more spending in other areas.

Some economists expect the central bank, to loosen monetary further later in the spring if lower oil prices appear to be weighing too heavily on progress toward the 2 percent inflation target that was meant to be achieved by now.

"Any change in BOJ tack will be gradual and nuanced as the recovery remains nascent," Mizuho Bank said in an analysis Monday. The aim is to achieve "escape velocity" by the time of the next sales tax hike, it said.

ASIAN BRIEFS

China takes down senior leader amid anti-corruption campaign

BEIJING (AP)—Chinese authorities say a former vice chairman for the country's top political advisory body has been expelled from the Communist Party and stripped of all government positions because of bribery. The Central Commission for Discipline Commission, the Communist Party's top watchdog agency, said Monday in a written statement that Su Rong, ex-vice chairman for the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, took "huge amounts of bribes" and sought promotions for cadres and benefits for businesses. President Xi Jinping has been waging a sweeping anti-corruption campaign to restore public trust in the ruling party, warning that rampant corruption threatens the party's rule. Su, 66, is one of the highest-ranking officials to fall. He had served as the provincial party chief in Qinghai, Gansu and Jiangxi provinces.

Singapore's prime minister diagnosed with prostate cancer

SINGAPORE (AP)—Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, but is expected to recover fully after undergoing surgery, his office said Sunday. Lee, 63, will have surgery to remove his prostate gland on Monday, the Prime Minister's Office said in a statement posted on its official website. Last month, Lee underwent an MRI of the prostate that showed suspicious lesions, the statement said. A subsequent biopsy found that one out of 38 samples contained cancer cells. Lee decided to undergo surgery on the advice of a panel of doctors, and "is expected to recover fully," the statement said, adding that he will be on medical leave for one week. Lee, whose father, Lee Kuan Yew, was Singapore's first prime minister, has been the city state's leader since 2004.

South Africa protests apartheid column in Japanese press

TOKYO (AP)—South Africa's ambassador to Japan has complained to a conservative Japanese newspaper about a recent column that advocated separate residences for foreign workers modeled on apartheid. The Sankei newspaper said on its website over the weekend that it had received a letter of protest from Ambassador Mohau Pheko. She called apartheid a crime against humanity that should not be justified in the 21st century.

The Feb. 11 column by well-known conservative writer Ayako Sono said that Japan needs foreign workers to offset its shrinking population, but that different races should live separately. She has served on an advisory panel for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on education. A Sankei statement says that the column is Sono's opinion, and that Sankei believes that apartheid and racial discrimination should not be permitted.

Sri Lanka's new president makes India his 1st visit abroad

NEW DELHI (AP)—Sri Lanka's new leader is underlining India's importance as a regional ally by making it his first official foreign destination as president, following years of uneasy relations with New Delhi and international pressure to speed up post-civil war reconciliation efforts at home.

President Maithripala Sirisena's four-day visit, beginning with his arrival Sunday evening, has been welcomed by Indian officials, who are planning a ceremony and banquet for him Monday and top-tier meetings befitting the countries' "unique" historical and cultural ties, Indian foreign ministry spokesman Syed Akbaruddin said.

Relations between India and Sri Lanka had become tense in recent years, as China grew cozier with the island nation, long considered by India as being within its traditional sphere of influence.

Sirisena

Last year, President Xi Jinping became the first Chinese leader to visit Sri Lanka in 28 years as he courted Colombo's support for a maritime trade route. Sri Lanka also irked New Delhi by allowing two Chinese submarines to dock along its coastline, and by brokering deals for billions in Chinese loans and infrastructure projects.

Sirisena has said his government will review the loans and projects approved under his powerful predecessor and one-time ally, Mahinda Rajapaksa, whom he defeated in a stunning election upset last month. While campaigning for the election, Sirisena had criticized the Chinese projects as debt traps, but he has since announced plans to visit China after his India trip.

"We will be making a new beginning with India," government minister and spokesman Lakshman Kiriella told reporters in Sri Lanka on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Sirisena will be looking this week to boost bilateral trade with India, now standing at around $1 billion. He is to visit a Buddhist temple complex in the eastern state of Bihar before traveling to the southern Indian city of Tirupati later Tuesday and returning to his country Wednesday.

He and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi are also likely to focus talks on Sri Lanka's efforts to establish reconciliation in the wake of its long civil war, which Sirisena has named a priority for his government.

Sri Lanka's ethnic Tamil minority complain that little has been done to restore trust and national unity since the 25-year civil war ended with the routing of ethnic Tamil rebels in 2009, despite pledges to devolve power to Tamil-populated provinces.

Hong Kong captain gets 8 years for deadly 2012 sea collision

HONG KONG (AP)—News reports say a Hong Kong ferry captain has been sentenced to eight years in prison for the deaths of 39 people in a 2012 accident that was the southern Chinese city's biggest maritime disaster in decades.

A judge on Tuesday handed down the sentence to Lai Saiming after his conviction on charges of manslaughter and endangering the safety of others at sea.

That's according to the South China Morning Post newspaper and Radio Television Hong Kong.

The captain of the other boat involved in the collision, Chow Chi-wai, was given a nine-month sentence. He was cleared by a jury of manslaughter but convicted of endangering others at sea.

All of those killed, including eight children, and most of the nearly 100 injured were aboard Chow's boat.

World

Police say Copenhagen gunman had criminal record, gang past

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP)—The slain gunman suspected in the deadly Copenhagen attacks was a 22-year-old with a history of violence and may have been inspired by Islamic terrorists—and possibly the Charlie Hebdo massacre in Paris, Danish authorities said Sunday.

Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt mourned the two people killed and vowed to protect freedom of speech and Denmark's Jewish community.

The suspect was killed in a gunbattle with a SWAT team early Sunday. He had opened fire Saturday at a cultural center hosting a seminar on free speech with an artist who had caricatured the Prophet Muhammad and then later at security forces outside a synagogue, police said.

A Danish filmmaker was killed in the first attack. Nine hours later, a security guard protecting a bat mitzvah near a synagogue was slain. Five police officers were wounded in the shootings.

Jens Madsen, head of the Danish intelligence agency PET, said investigators believe the gunman "could have been inspired by the events in Paris." Last month Islamic militants carried out a massacre at the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo followed by an attack on Jews at a kosher grocery, killing 17 people.

"He could also have been inspired by material sent out by (the Islamic State group) and others," Madsen said.

AP

In this photo dated Saturday Feb. 14, 2015, issued by Copenhagen Police believed to show the suspect in a shooting at a freedom of speech event in Copenhagen, in a photo believed to be taken on a street camera near to where the getaway car was later found dumped.

Copenhagen police made no mention of Islamic extremism and said the Danish-born suspect had a history of violence and weapons offenses and connections to a criminal gang. They didn't release his name.

"Denmark has been hit by terror," Thorning-Schmidt said. "We do not know the motive for the alleged perpetrator's actions, but we know that there are forces that want to hurt Denmark. They want to rebuke our freedom of speech."

Chief Rabbi Jair Melchior identified the security guard as Dan Uzan, a 27-year-old member of Denmark's 7,000-strong Jewish community. Two police officers who were near the synagogue were slightly wounded.

In the earlier shooting, 55-year-old filmmaker Finn Noergaard was killed while attending a panel discussion titled "Art, Blasphemy and Freedom of Expression."

One of the main speakers was Lars Vilks, a 68-year-old Swedish artist who has faced numerous death threats for depicting the Prophet Muhammad as a dog in 2007. Vilks, who was whisked away unharmed by bodyguards, told The Associated Press he believed he was the intended target.

Agnieszka Kolek, another panelist, said she heard shouts of "God is great" in Arabic.

Israeli leader calls for mass Jewish influx after attack

JERUSALEM (AP)—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Sunday for the "massive immigration" of European Jews to Israel following a deadly shooting near Copenhagen's main synagogue, renewing a blunt message that has upset some of Israel's friends in Europe.

Netanyahu said that at a time of rising anti-Semitism in Europe, Israel is the only place where Jews can truly feel safe. His comments triggered an angry response from Copenhagen's chief rabbi, Jair Melchior, who said he was "disappointed" by the remarks.

"People from Denmark move to Israel because they love Israel, because of Zionism. But not because of terrorism," Melchior told The Associated Press. "If the way we deal with terror is to run somewhere else, we should all run to a deserted island."

Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt expressed support for the Jewish community, telling reporters: "They belong in Denmark, they are a strong part of our community, and we will do everything we can to protect the Jewish community in our country."

Netanyahu issued his call during the weekly meeting of his Cabinet, which approved a previously scheduled $46 million plan to encourage Jewish immigration from France, Belgium and Ukraine—countries where large numbers of Jews have expressed interest in moving to Israel. France and Belgium have experienced deadly attacks on their Jewish communities in in recent years, most recently an attack in Paris last month that killed four Jews at a kosher market. Ukraine, meanwhile, is in the midst of a conflict between government troops and Russian-backed separatists.

"This wave of attacks is expected to continue," Netanyahu told his Cabinet. "Jews deserve security in every country, but we say to our Jewish brothers and sisters, Israel is your home."

His comments came amid a tight re-election campaign ahead of March 17 elections. Seeking a third consecutive term, Netanyahu has focused his campaign on Israel's security needs, repeatedly warning voters about the many threats from Islamic radicals throughout the region. There was no immediate reaction from his chief opponents.

Video purports to show IS militants beheading hostages

CAIRO (AP)—A video purporting to show the mass beheading of Coptic Christian hostages was released Sunday by militants in Libya affiliated with the Islamic State group.

The killings raise the possibility that the Islamic militant group—which controls about a third of Syria and Iraq in a self-declared caliphate—has established a direct affiliate less than 500 miles (800 kilometers) from the southern tip of Italy. One of the militants in the video makes direct reference to that possibility, saying the group now plans to "conquer Rome."

The militants had been holding 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians hostage for weeks, all laborers rounded up from the city of Sirte in December and January. It was not clear from the video whether all 21 hostages were killed. It was one of the first such beheading videos from an Islamic State group affiliate to come from outside the group's core territory in Syria and Iraq.

The Associated Press could not immediately independently verify the video. But the Egyptian government and the Coptic Church, which is based in Egypt, both declared it authentic.

The Egyptian government declared a seven-day mourning period and President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi addressed the nation late Sunday night, pledging resilience in the fight against terrorism.

"These cowardly actions will not undermine our determination" said el-Sissi, who also banned all travel to Libya by Egyptian citizens and said his government reserves the right to seek retaliation. "Egypt and the whole world are in a fierce battle with extremist groups carrying extremist ideology and sharing the same goals."

The Coptic Church in a statement called on its followers to have "confidence that their great nation won't rest without retribution for the evil criminals."

The video's makers identified themselves as the Tripoli Province of the Islamic State group. A still photo, apparently taken from the video, was published last week in the Islamic State group's Dabiq online magazine—indicating a direct connection between the Libyan militants and the main group.

The video, released Sunday night, depicts several men in orange jumpsuits being led along a beach, each accompanied by a masked militant. The men are made to kneel and one militant, dressed differently that the others, addresses the camera in North American-accented English.

"All crusaders: safety for you will be only wishes, especially if you are fighting us all together. Therefore we will fight you all together," he said. "The sea you have hidden Sheikh Osama Bin Laden's body in, we swear to Allah we will mix it with your blood."

The men are then laid face-down and simultaneously beheaded.

The militant speaker then pointed northward across the red-stained waves and said, "We will conquer Rome, by Allah's permission."

In el-Aour, a dusty and impoverished village some 200 kilometers (125 miles) south of Cairo and home to 13 of the hostages, friends and family assumed the worst as soon as the photo was published on Thursday.

On Saturday, two days after the photo appeared, the community was wrapped in sorrow. Men covered their heads with dirt in a sign of both grief and shame. Women slapped their own faces or let out heart-wrenching shrieks of pain.

Villagers accused the Egyptian government of doing little to help the captives. The authorities, they say, were able to free Muslim Egyptians abducted in Libya in recent months but have done nothing to save the 21 because they are Christian—an accusation rooted in the deep sense of religious discrimination felt by most Egyptian Copts.

Ukraine cease-fire largely holding, Debaltseve still tense

LUHANSKE, Ukraine (AP)—A cease-fire that went into effect Sunday in eastern Ukraine appeared largely to be holding, although continued fighting over a bitterly contested railway hub is threatening to upend the delicate settlement.

The leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany, who last week brokered a deal to try to end the conflict that has raged since April, agreed in a conference call Sunday that hostilities should also cease around the government-held town of Debaltseve, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's office said. Undeterred, armed separatists appeared intent to pursue their claim to the town.

Heavy fog shrouding sodden fields muffled the sound of artillery, but regular shelling could still be heard from Luhanske, a town about 15 kilometers (9 miles) to northwest of Debaltseve and over 80 kilometers west of the city Luhansk. Associated Press journalists were blocked from moving closer by Ukrainian troops, who said it was not safe to travel ahead.

The cease-fire has kindled slender hopes of a reprieve from a conflict that has claimed more than 5,300 lives. Withdrawal of heavy armor from the front line by both sides is scheduled to begin Monday.

Attention will be focused in the coming days on Debaltseve, where Ukrainian forces have been fending off severe onslaughts from the rebels for weeks. The town is a railway link between the main separatist-held cities of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The diminution in hostilities was agreed after a marathon session of diplomacy that brought together Poroshenko, Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French leader Francois Hollande for talks in the capital of Belarus, Minsk.

In a conference call Sunday, the leaders agreed the cease-fire should extend to Debaltseve, according to a statement from Poroshenko's office.

That flies in the face of the position taken by rebels, who argue they should be granted immediate control over the town as it is entirely surrounded by their forces. Separatist officials have said any force adopted against Ukrainian troops in Debaltseve would accordingly not violate the Minsk agreement.

As he issued the cease-fire order at one minute after midnight Kiev time Sunday (2201 GMT, 5:01 p.m. EST), Poroshenko had said the road to the town remained open and that Ukrainian troops there had been resupplied with ammunition.

Merkel's office said that the call's participants welcomed the general acceptance of the truce, but were concerned about continuing combat operations, especially in the area around Debaltseve.

"They showed determination to work toward a full implementation of the true. As a next step, Tuesday's agreed on withdrawal of heavy arms had to be started," the statement said.

The offices of both Merkel and Hollande said the leaders involved in Sunday's call also expressed joint support for adopting a United Nations Security Council resolution codifying the measures adopted in Minsk.

A statement from the Kremlin confirmed they discussed the difficult situation in Debaltseve and also the role of the OSCE in monitoring the cease-fire.

Under the deal hammered out at last week's negotiations, the progress of the cease-fire is to be monitored by observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The head of the OSCE monitoring mission, Ertugrul Apakan, said that the organization has dispatched 20 patrols to monitor the state of the cease-fire.

"We made an attempt to send our monitors to Debaltseve, however our patrol has been refused access by the so-called DPR," Apakan said, using the acronym for the Donetsk People's Republic separatist movement.

Focus

In this Oct. 16, 2014 file photo, former Navy helicopter pilot and San Diego Gas & Electric unmanned aircraft operator Teena Deering holds a drone as it is prepared for takeoff near Boulevard, Calif. Long-awaited rules to usher in a new era in which small, commercial drones zipping through U.S. skies are a part of everyday life were proposed by the Federal Aviation Administration on Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015. AP

Drone on: US proposes rules for the era of drones

By JOAN LOWY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP)—Drone on, the government says.

Just not through the night sky. Or close to an airport. Or out of the operator's sight. And probably not winging its way with a pizza or package, any time soon.

Long-anticipated rules proposed Sunday will open an era in which small (under 55 pounds) commercial unmanned aircraft perform routine tasks—crop monitoring, aerial photography, inspections of bridges and cell towers, and much more. But not right away. Final rules are probably two to three years away.

And when they are in place, they may include a separate category with fewer restrictions for very small drones, likely to be defined as less than 4.4 pounds.

The Federal Aviation Administration released a variety of proposed requirements for commercial operators to meet, such as passing a knowledge test administered by the agency as well as a federal security check. The small drones could travel as fast as 100 mph, at altitudes of 500 feet or lower. Flights over people except those involved in the drone's operation would be prohibited.

"We have tried to be flexible in writing these rules," said FAA Administrator Michael Huerta. "We want to maintain today's outstanding level of aviation safety without placing an undue regulatory burden on an emerging industry."

The agency is researching technology that he hopes will eventually enable small drones to fly safely beyond the sight of operators, Huerta said. He emphasized that introduction of commercial drones into the national airspace will be a staged process. The government is also looking ahead to how larger drones might be allowed to fly in airspace shared by manned aircraft, for example, he said.

One of the key safety concerns is that without a human on board the ability to "see and avoid" other aircraft is limited. Another concern is that the link between the operator and a remote control aircraft can be broken, causing the drone to fly away until it loses power or collides with something.

Cases of flyaway drones getting stuck in trees or hitting buildings are rampant. Last month, a drone that its operator lost control of flew over the White House fence and crashed on the lawn before Secret Service agents could block it.

Even with the proposed safety restrictions, drones can transform urban infrastructure management, farming, public safety, coastal security, military training, search and rescue, disaster response and more, the White House said in a presidential memorandum on privacy released in conjunction with the rules.

The memorandum lays out measures federal agencies must follow to guard against abuse of data collected in their drone flights. Among other steps, the order requires agencies to review privacy and civil rights protections before deploying drone technology and to adhere to a range of controls. Personally identifiable information collected in drone flights is to be kept no longer than 180 days, although there are exceptions.

It's questionable whether such steps will satisfy civil liberties advocates, who've objected strongly to the government's vigorous use of digital surveillance in the name of national security. But drone advocates were generally happy with the proposal, although they disagreed with some of the details.

"I am very pleased to see a much more reasonable approach to future regulation than many feared," said Brendan Schulman, a New York attorney who unsuccessfully challenged FAA's restrictions on drone flights.

The agency currently bans commercial drone flights except for a few dozen companies that have been granted waivers. That ban will stay in place until regulations become final, but FAA officials plan to continue granting waivers case by case. About 300 waiver requests are pending and new requests are being filed almost daily.

The proposed rules are "a good first step" bringing the U.S. closer to realizing the benefits of drone technology, said Brian Wynne, president and CEO of the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International, a trade group.

An FAA analysis points to an estimate by the trade association that drones will create 70,000 jobs with an economic impact of more than $13.6 billion in the first three years after their integration into U.S. skies.

In a big concession to industry, the FAA said it won't require an "airworthiness certificate" for small drones. The design and manufacture of each model of manned airplanes and helicopters go through a rigorous approval process by the FAA before they are granted airworthiness certificates. That can take years.

The FAA decided that drone technology was changing so rapidly that by the time a model received an airworthiness certificate the remote-controlled aircraft might already be out of date, Huerta said.

SIDEBAR

A look at proposed drone rules

Some highlights of rules proposed Sunday on routine flights by small, commercial drones and on privacy protections when the government uses drones to collect information:

DRONE FLIGHTS

- Proposed Federal Aviation Administration regulations would permit commercial operation of remote-controlled aircraft weighing less than 55 pounds. They would be permitted to fly up to 100 mph and up to 500 feet in altitude.
- Operators would have to pass an FAA test of aeronautical knowledge and a Transportation Security Administration background check. Operators would not need a private pilot license, a concession to industry.
- Only one operator would be required instead of an operator and a spotter to keep an eye out for other aircraft, another concession.
- Operators would have to keep drones within eyesight at all times, which significantly limits the distance they can fly. The restriction probably would prevent drone delivery as proposed by Amazon.
- Flights would be prohibited within 5 miles of an airport and over people not involved in the drone's operation.
- Drones would not be required to have an FAA airworthiness certificate similar to those required of manned aircraft, another concession. However, they would have to be registered with the FAA and would receive an "N number" for identification purposes similar to the numbers on airplane tails.
- The FAA will accept comments for 60 days after the proposal is published. It's expected to be two or three years before the rules are final.
- The FAA will continue to grant waivers case by case to its current ban on commercial drone flights while working on final rules. A few dozen requests for waivers have been granted; more than 300 requests are pending.
- Current rules for model aircraft, which are often indistinguishable from small drones, would remain the same.

PRIVACY

- A presidential memorandum requires federal agencies to ensure that policies are place on government drones to protect against their abusive use.
- The policies should "prohibit the collection, use, retention, or dissemination of data in any manner that would violate the First Amendment or in any manner that would discriminate against persons based upon their ethnicity, race, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity, in violation of law."
- Agencies must publish information within one year describing how to access their drone policies and procedures.
- Agencies must examine their drone policies and procedures before deploying new unmanned aircraft technology, and at least every three years.
- The Commerce Department, working with other agencies, must launch an effort that includes business groups, privacy advocates and others within 90 days to develop privacy rules for commercial and private drones.
- The American Civil Liberties Union praised the memorandum as an important step, but said it falls short of fully protecting the privacy of Americans. For example, the proposal allows the use of data gathered by domestic drones for any "authorized purpose," which is not defined, leaving the door open to inappropriate drone use by federal agencies, the ACLU said.

Overdrive

By JEAN JENNINGS
JEANKNOWSCARS.COM

With 2015 Sonata, Hyundai jumps ahead of its Japanese competitors

2015 Hyundai Sonata 2.0T. MCT

If you're still someone who hears the word "Hyundai" and thinks "cheap car," you will be blown away by the 2015 Sonata, one of Hyundai's most important vehicles.

Yes, it's a reliable ride at a reasonable price. But if you're looking for a gorgeous and lavishly appointed family sedan, state-of-the-art safety technology (forward collision, lane departure, blind spot and cross-traffic warnings), a choice of two great four-cylinder engines, a flawless six-speed automatic transmission, AND a reasonable price, the 2015 Sonata ought to be front and center on your shopping list.

Hyundai Motor America colonized the United States in 1985, sending its first car—the 1986 Excel—forth to prosper. It helped that it had a rock-bottom price, because it was a tad, shall we say, crappy.

The Sonata came in late 1988, designed by Ital Design in Turin, Italy, and built on a Mitsubishi Galant platform, a clever strategy by the fledgling Korean carmaker to play catch-up with the Japanese invasion. Do not be fooled. Hyundai's price strategy kept the company in business while design and engineering raced furiously forward.

Twenty-seven years later, now in its seventh generation, the Sonata has been one of the brightest lights in a growing brand, first setting a record with more than 200,000 Sonatas sold in North America in 2010, and winning awards from major enthusiast magazines, consumer websites and safety agencies along the way.

Sonata played a role in helping Hyundai supplant all of its competition on the 2014 J.D. Power Initial Quality Study, ranking an impressive fourth behind Porsche (No. 1), Jaguar (No. 2), and Lexus (No. 3). Perhaps most satisfying: Hyundai ranks ahead of Toyota (No. 5), Honda (No. 8), and Ford (No. 16).

I took a 2015 Hyundai Sonata for a test drive, which just happened to be a round-trip from Michigan to Louisiana and back. My first concern was, would there be enough room for the luggage, the presents, the hunting gear, the fishing gear, and the variety of outerwear to cover every possible weather condition? What about the cooler full of pheasants to be swapped out with all the fish I was planning to catch? And a second cooler big enough to hold the wild boar my husband planned on bagging?

No problem whatsoever, other than that there would be no wild boar. There was, however, a cooler packed with ice and speckled trout. Ahem.

Not only does the Sonata have best-in-class interior volume, it has a deep, wide trunk with a tall, wide opening. You'd be surprised by how many cars I've tested with a trunk opening too narrow to take a big-gish piece of luggage.

I knew the Sonata would be fun—even in the more mountainous sections of our 2,100-mile round-trip drive—because we had the Sport 2.0T model. It's the most fun-minded of the Sonata's five trim levels, thanks to an impressive 2.0-liter four-cylinder turbo engine and a six-speed automatic transmission so competent that we never noticed it.

Rather than digging us all into a hole trying to explain the multiple sub-levels of equipment packages available among the five trims (SE, Sport, Limited, Sport 2.0T and Eco), I just won't go there. Instead, I'll use my brilliant orange ("Urban Sunset") 2.0T as an example. The base price is $29,385. There is exactly one item on the options list: a carpeted floor mat for $125. The impressive list of standard features includes my big three safety must-haves: blind spot detection, cross-traffic alert and a rear-view camera. All three have saved my bacon out there.

More standard delights are the hands-free trunk opener that reads the key fob in your pocket, heated front seats and lots of leather. You can spring for the Ultimate package if you need a panoramic sunroof and heated seats for your back-seat guests. The package also contains about 15 other technology wonders. You can explore the vast list of features at Hyundaiusa.com (https://www.hyundaiusa.com/sonata/index.aspx).

Back to where we began. The Sonata has been one of the pillars of Hyundai's U.S. success, and the 2015 model has reached new heights of engineering excellence. It's also just flat out beautiful, one of the most important determining factors in the hotly contested family sedan class. As one of the great unsung brands, Hyundai deserves its due.

NUTS & BOLTS

2015 Hyundai Sonata:

- Price range: $21,960-$34,335 (prices include destination charge)
- EPA fuel economy:
- 25 mpg city/37 mpg highway (2.4-liter 4-cylinder)
- 23/32 mpg (turbo 2.0-liter 4-cylinder)
- Competition:
  Toyota Camry $24,460
  Honda Accord $22,925
  Ford Fusion $22,835
  Fun-O-Meter: 7

MOTORING Q&A

Mysterious clunk could have many culprits

By PAUL BRAND
STAR TRIBUNE (MINNEAPOLIS)

Q: I have a nice '93 GMC conversion van that has been stored winters since new. There is a clunking sound when moving forward or backward while turning left or right, and it's getting worse. It has been in two shops with no results. One shop removed brake backing plates and lubricated parts, the other said they couldn't tell where the noise was coming from. I feel this needs to be repaired before something happens.

A: Without identifying which model van—full-size or mid-size—or which end of the vehicle the clunking originates from, troubleshooting is much more difficult. But here are several possibilities.

If the noise is coming from the front, the most common source is a broken sway bar link. These tend to rust and when broken often generate a solid clunk. Other potential front-end culprits are worn ball joints, control arm bushings, worn steering tie rods or drag link, a failed shock absorber, broken coil spring or loose steering box or rack. If the vehicle is equipped with a tilt steering wheel, the noise could also originate in the steering column itself due to a burr or wear in the upper bearing assembly. This noise is typically heard as the steering wheel returns to center.

If the noise originates in the rear, possible culprits include a rear axle/bearing assembly, differential or spider gear problem, leaf spring bushing, failed shock or loose exhaust.

If the clunk originates in the brake system, it could be the brake pads moving back and forth in the calipers. If the issue is with the rear drum brakes, wear on the backing plate can cause the brake shoes to "catch" or clunk when applied.

Q: I've been changing my own oil for nearly 50 years and I have some questions. Is there really a necessary difference between 5-20 and 5-30? Why do manufacturers have such odd capacities? My Escape needs 5.3 quarts, my Tacoma uses 5.5 and my son's Contour uses 5.8. Can't they just keep it in full-quart or half-quart amounts for ease of changing? If a car uses a blend can you top the odd amount with a regular oil, blend or full synthetic? Finally, when I first started to change oil I was told to put a bit of oil on the filter gasket to help it seat. Is this correct?

A: One of the easiest ways to improve fuel economy is to fill the engine with lighter weight oil. The less viscous the oil, the less power needed to pump it through the engine under pressure. I remember when car makers switched from 10W-30 to 5W-30, fuel economy improved by 1/10th of 1 mpg. Today's lubricants are so far superior in performance that we now see 0W-20 oil recommended for many new cars.

Regarding oil capacities, I suspect there are two main factors. First, adequate volume to continually lubricate and cool the engine's mechanical components while maintaining continuous flow during acceleration, braking and cornering. Secondly, design constraints for oil pan size, shape and location. And finally, some engines were designed to metric sizes, which are different than SAE measurements. The issue of partial quarts isn't much of a factor since today's oils come in resealable plastic bottles.

As long as the oil meets the car maker's specs, there is no harm in topping up with petroleum, semi-synthetic or full synthetic.

Not only is it a good idea to "wet" the rubber seal on an oil filter to help it seal, partially filling (if possible) the filter before installation helps the engine build oil pressure faster at first start-up.

Q: Is it better for mileage or the car to cycle heating/cooling on and off or just leave them on?

A: Just leave the HVAC system on. Cabin heat is generated by waste heat from the engine in the coolant, so there's no significant cost or impact on the vehicle. The A/C compressor cycles on and off automatically to minimize cost, wear and tear.

Paul Brand, author of How to Repair Your Car, is an automotive troubleshooter, driving instructor and former race-car driver. Readers may write to him at: Star Tribune, 425 Portland Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minn., 55488 or via email at paulbrand@startribune.com. Please explain the problem in detail and include a daytime phone number. Because of the volume of mail, we cannot provide personal replies.

Life & Style

'SNL' celebrates its big 4-0 with an anniversary special

NEW YORK (AP)—With a measure of anniversary hoopla perhaps exceeded only by the nation's bicentennial, "Saturday Night Live" celebrated its 40th season on Sunday with a 3½-hour gala of stars, laughs and memories.

It aired live from New York's Studio 8H at NBC, which has been "SNL" HQ since premiering on a Saturday night in October 1975. It was a black-tie event so jammed with "SNL" alumni and other celebs they fueled an hour-long red carpet event before the big show even began. Some 80 names were listed in the opening credits.

It started with a medley of catchphrases, music and characters performed by Jimmy Fallon and Justin Timberlake that concluded, inevitably, with their pronouncement, "Live from New York, it's Saturday Night!"

Who was the rightful host? Steve Martin stepped up first, but was joined one by one by stars including Peyton Manning, Tom Hanks, Alec Baldwin, Billy Crystal, Melissa McCarthy, Paul McCartney and Paul Simon to dispute his selection.

Among the night's many tributes, Jack Nicholson noted that "when 'SNL' started, the last helicopter had just flown out of Vietnam, Watergate was still fresh in everyone's minds, and New York was broke."

Robert De Niro marveled that, 40 years later, "SNL" is "still at it. Forty years! That's like back when TV was still watched on TV."

Jerry Seinfeld said, "There are so many things about 'Saturday Night Live' that people don't know. For instance, I just found out that one of the original cast members in 1975 was Brian Williams."

AP

Justin Timberlake, left, Billy Crystal, center, and Jimmy Fallon attend the SNL 40th Anniversary Special at Rockefeller Plaza on Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015, in New York.

Seinfeld then took goofy questions from the VIP audience, including Michael Douglas, James Franco, Dakota Johnson and Sarah Palin, who asked, "How much do you think Lorne Michaels would pay me to run in 2016?"

"Run for president?" Seinfeld replied. "I don't think there's a number too big."

But it wasn't all live.

The first clip: John Belushi and Michael O'Donoghue in the language-lesson sketch with which the very first "SNL" episode opened.

A remarkable montage of audition tapes from prospective "SNL" cast members included notable washouts Jim Carrey and Stephen Colbert.

New York was honored with clips and comic sketches capturing the love-it-hate-it spirit of the Big Apple through the decades, as well as a pivotal moment from the first "SNL" episode to air after 9-11 when then Mayor Rudolph Giuliani told "SNL" creator Michaels "that 'Saturday Night Live' is one our great New York City institutions, and that's why it's important for you to do your show tonight."

"Can we be funny?" asked Michaels, to which Giuliani replied with impeccable timing, "Why start now?"

Another group of clips focused on sports-related skits. Another gathered moments from filmed comedy segments (including a nod to hapless Mr. Bill).

And yet another sample reel traced the show's legacy of political humor.

Will Ferrell as 2000 presidential candidate George W. Bush summed up the best argument for his election: "Strategery." And Darrell Hammond as his opponent, Al Gore, offered his own: "Lockbox."

On a serious note, an in memoriam segment remembered the members of the "SNL" troupe who have passed, and not just the on-camera stars (and The Voice, Don Pardo), but departed members of the behind-the-scenes company and crew.

But it wasn't all taped. A classic commercial parody was encored live: Super Bass-o-Matic, with pitchman Dan Aykroyd and Laraine Newman repeating their performances from 1976. An all-star soap-spoof "The Californians" was revived, including Taylor Swift, Bradley Cooper and Betty White. Dana Carvey and Mike Myers reteamed for "Wayne's World."

And a super anchor team was gathered for "Weekend Update": Tina Fey, Amy Poehler and Jane Curtin. Their top story, of course, was the "SNL" anniversary.

"Viewers of 'Saturday Night Live' span several generations," Fey reported, "from the Baby Boomers to Generation X all the way to whatever you call the little dummies who are live-tweeting this right now instead of watching it."

As a guest commentator, the classic character Roseanne Rosannadanna (created by the late Gilda Radner) was revived by Emma Stone. Edward Norton did a turn as Bill Hader's clubs correspondent Stefon. McCarthy did the late Chris Farley's motivational speaker Matt Foley.

Musical guests, as announced, were Kanye West, Miley Cyrus, McCartney and Simon.

The night's big hitch: Eddie Murphy was greeted like returning royalty, with an introductory tribute from Chris Rock that lasted much longer than Murphy's actual appearance. Murphy said little more than thanks.

After all the buildup, his blink-and-he-was-gone participation was an epic fail. It was the main disappointment in a long, very long, but mostly satisfying retrospective of TV's great comedy institution.

Best-picture nod for 'Selma' caps big year for black women

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Three black women released movies in 2014, more than ever before in a single year. And one of them is a contender for the motion picture academy's top prize.

But that's just three films in one year—out of the 373 that came out in theaters.

Black female filmmakers are one of Hollywood's greatest rarities. In the past seven years, only three were connected to the top 700 movies, according to recent research by the University of Southern California's Media, Diversity & Social Change Initiative.

"The ecosystem of filmmaking is problematic for women and people of color," said initiative director Stacy L. Smith. More than 95 percent of the directors of top-grossing films during the past decade have been men, she said. Looking at the top 700 films over a recent seven-year period, almost 90 percent of them were white.

So while there's been a lot of talk about the lack of diversity among this year's Oscar acting nominees, the larger issue may be the overwhelming lack of diversity among those telling the stories on the big screen.

"Selma" director Ava DuVernay, as a black woman, defied incredible odds with her film's best-picture bid at next Sunday's Academy Awards. But was it merely an exception?

"The push for me is that it doesn't stay an anomaly," said Gina Prince-Bythewood, writer and director of "Beyond the Lights," which earned an Oscar nod this year for its original song, "Grateful."

"The Oscars are not the problem," said Prince-Bythewood, whose credits include 2008's "The Secret Life of Bees" and her 2000 breakthrough, "Love & Basketball." "It's more so Hollywood and the films that are being greenlit."

She finds the dearth of stories about women equally disheartening. "Belle" director Amma Asante agreed, noting that all of this year's eight best-picture contenders are about men. And DuVernay is the only female director behind any best-picture nominee.

Asante, DuVernay and Prince-Bythewood credit coincidental timing and continued hard work for their accomplishments in 2014.

Asante suggests the success of "12 Years A Slave," "The Butler" and "Mandela" in 2013 may have contributed to their films being financed the same year.

"We were lucky that they all got greenlit at a time when the films that came before us were showing that these films were important and they were attracting audiences," she said.

But there's no momentum if the number of women and people of color behind the camera don't continue to increase, DuVernay said.

"Three is not enough. While we celebrate the three, we're talking three in the hundreds of films that came out last year between the U.K. and the United States," she said. "Unless (our success) equals more women being able to do the same thing next year—which legacy says is probably not going to happen—then we're still at the same place."

So how can non-white, non-male voices speak more loudly in Hollywood?

Financing is often the first obstacle. Smith's research finds a general perception in Hollywood that stories by or about women are more niche than mainstream, and therefore less profitable. Asante laughs at that.

"We're half the population!" she said. Recent blockbusters like "Gone Girl" and "The Hunger Games" franchise show large audiences will come see female-led films.

The frustrating truth, DuVernay and the other directors said, is that the number of female filmmakers of any ethnicity working in Hollywood has remained essentially unchanged for the past two decades, hovering around five percent.

But they insist women have to keep making movies, despite the odds.

"Stop waiting for someone to say it's OK to move forward," DuVernay said. "You just have to find a way to make the work. ... You have to make it with what you have and by any means necessary."

Be sure to make them good movies, added Prince-Bythewood, since quality, heartfelt stories speak to everyone.

"People do not go to the theater out of guilt," she said. "A film should not be medicine. ... I want people to go to my films because they're good."

Even films with wide appeal across ethnicity and gender can be impeded by marginalized marketing based on the women-as-niche perspective, she said. "Beyond the Lights," her contemporary story about a pop star who finds love outside the spotlight, was marketed almost exclusively to women, she lamented, even though early screenings were well received by both genders.

"Let's not assume that an audience is not going to respond to a film," she said. "Put it out there and make it enticing for men and women."

It just makes good business sense, Asante and DuVernay said. Today's broadening TV landscape—which has been quicker to embrace women and people of color—gives viewers hundreds of good reasons to skip the theater and stay home.

"When you allow a variety of people to look through their lens and tell a story through their lens," Asante said, "what you get is a more interesting variety of films at your local cinema."

Audiences want to see movies that reflect the world around them, DuVernay said.

"If you are a person ... that has a human spirit looking to be enlarged, you cannot do that staying in the same room with the same people," she said. "It's not about diversity. It's not about even inclusion or representation. It's about reality."

'Grand Budapest,''Imitation Game' top Writers Guild awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—In an awards season dominated by "Boyhood" and "Birdman," the Writers Guild of America on Saturday honored two different choices with their top film awards: "The Grand Budapest Hotel" and "The Imitation Game." Awards were presented in simultaneous ceremonies in New York and Los Angeles.

In the original screenplay category, Richard Linklater's "Boyhood" lost out to Wes Anderson and Hugo Guinness for their darkly whimsical, candy-colored fable "The Grand Budapest Hotel."

Other nominees in the category included "Whiplash," written by director Damien Chazelle, "Nightcrawler," written by director Dan Gilroy, and "Foxcatcher," written by E. Max Frye and Dan Futterman.

Anderson and Guinness recently picked up the BAFTA for best screenplay as well and are considered favorites to win the Academy Award.

"Birdman" was not eligible for the WGA award, but it will be competing with "Grand Budapest" in the original screenplay category for the Oscar on Feb. 22.

In the adapted screenplay category, Graham Moore took the prize for the World War II-set Alan Turing biopic "The Imitation Game," adapted from Andrew Hodges' book "Alan Turing: The Enigma."

Moore's work won over adapted screenplay nominees "American Sniper," "Gone Girl," "Guardians of the Galaxy" and "Wild."

"The Theory of Everything," which was not eligible for the WGA, won the adapted screenplay BAFTA over "The Imitation Game." Both will be competing for the Oscar against "American Sniper," "Inherent Vice" and "Whiplash."

In addition to film, videogames, radio, news, and new media, the Writers Guild also honors television work.

"True Detective" writer and creator Nic Pizzolatto took the award for best drama series and best new series. Louis CK won best comedy series and episodic comedy for his show "Louie."

In the comedy/variety category, "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver" won for series and the 71st Annual Golden Globe Awards for specials.

AP

In this image released by Universal Pictures and Focus Features, Dakota Johnson, left, and Jamie Dornan appear in a scene from the film, "Fifty Shades of Grey."

'Fifty Shades of Grey' whips up stunning $81.7 million

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Audiences were more than curious to check out the big-screen adaptation of the racy phenomenon "Fifty Shades of Grey" this weekend. The erotic R-rated drama sizzled in its debut, earning an estimated $81.7 million from 3,646 theaters in its first three days, distributor Universal Pictures said on Sunday.

In addition to destroying Valentine's and Presidents Day weekend records, "Fifty Shades of Grey" has also become the second-highest February debut ever, behind "Passion of the Christ's" $83.9 million opening in 2004.

The chart-topping film cost a modest $40 million to produce. Starring Dakota Johnson and Jamie Dornan as Anastasia Steele and Christian Grey, it could be on track to earn over $90 million across the four-day holiday weekend.

"Our fondest wishes were realized," said Universal's President of Domestic Distribution Nick Carpou. "This is one of those moments where I can speak for the entire studio and say we're celebrating."

Carpou was especially pleased that audiences in large, mid-size, and small markets turned out to see the film despite weather challenges in the Northeast.

"We had a tremendous amount of interest from small-town exhibitors," said Carpou, noting strong outings in the South. "That speaks to their patrons really wanting to see the film as soon as possible and be part of what everyone is talking about."

According to Universal, North American audiences were 68 percent female.

1. "**Fifty Shades of Grey**," $81.7 million ($158 million international).
2. "**Kingsman: The Secret Service**," $35.6 million ($23.1 million international).
3. "**The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water**," $30.5 million ($13.5 million international).
4. "**American Sniper**," $16.4 million ($3.7 million international).
5. "**Jupiter Ascending**," $9.4 million ($15.6 million international).
6. "**Seventh Son**," $4.2 million ($730,000 international).
7. "**Paddington**," $4.1 million.
8. "**The Imitation Game**," $3.5 million ($4 million international).
9. "**The Wedding Ringer**," $3.4 million.
10. "**Project Almanac**," $2.7 million ($340,000 international).

Internationally, director Sam Taylor-Johnson's adaptation of E L James' book earned an estimated $158 million from 9,637 locations in 58 territories. That's the second biggest international opening for Universal, right behind the $160.3 million debut from "Fast & Furious 6," and the highest international opening for an R-rated film ever.

"Those are summer-style blockbuster numbers in February," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for box office firm Rentrak.

"Controversy, or at least the conversation that's created by 'Fifty Shades of Grey,' suddenly infuses this movie into the mainstream conversation," he added. "They had to very carefully create a movie that was edgy, push the envelope, but without going too far to make it socially unacceptable."

Director Matthew Vaughn's "Kingsman: The Secret Service" also exceeded expectations, landing in second place with an estimated $35.6 million from 3,204 locations across the three-day period, according to Rentrak.

The R-rated comic book adaptation starring Colin Firth and Samuel L. Jackson cost a reported $81 million to produce and should earn around $41 million across the four-day period.

Animated children's film "The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water" came in third with $30.5 million in its second weekend in theaters, falling only 45 percent. As one of the few family-friendly options in theaters, Paramount's PG-rated movie could pass $100 million by the end of the holiday weekend.

Rounding out the top five were holdovers "American Sniper," with $16.4 million, and "Jupiter Ascending," with $9.4 million.

The Oscar-nominated "American Sniper," now in its fifth weekend of wide release, has earned over $300 million in North America to date.

"We should learn in 2015 to not underestimate how well films can do," Dergarabedian said. "Coming off a 2014 where we were down 5.2 percent, where a lot of movies did not live up to expectations, 2015 is right now running like a freight train toward the first $11 billion year in North America."

Poet laureate Philip Levine dies at age 87

FRESNO, Calif. (AP)—Philip Levine, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet whose intimate portraits of blue-collar life were grounded in personal experience and political conscience, died Saturday. Levine was 87.

Levine, the country's poet laureate in 2011-2012, died at his home in Fresno, California, of pancreatic and liver cancer, his wife said Sunday.

A native of Detroit and son of Russian Jewish immigrants, Levine was profoundly shaped by his working-class childhood and years spent in jobs ranging from driving a truck to assembling parts at a Chevrolet plant.

Although he taught in several colleges, he had little in common with the academic poets of his time. He was not abstract or insular or digressive. He consciously modeled himself after Walt Whitman as a poet of everyday experience and cosmic wonder, writing tactile, conversational poems about his childhood, living in Spain, marriage and parenting and poetry itself.

Levine

"We've lost a great presence in American poetry," said Edward Hirsch, a friend of Levine and president of the Guggenheim Foundation.

Levine captured the ways "ordinary people are extraordinary," while writing poems that are accessible to readers, Hirsch said Sunday. "They move between the most ordinary diction and high romantic heights."

Levine loved the earth and sky as much as any poet of nature, but he came to be identified with poems about work and workers, like "Buying and Selling" or "Saturday Sweeping," in which employees toil under a leaky roof and "blue hesitant light." In "What Work Is," the title piece of his celebrated 1991 collection, he offers a grim sketch of standing on line in the rain, hoping for a job:

This is about waiting,
shifting from one foot to another.
Feeling the light rain falling like mist
into your hair, blurring your vision
until you think you see your own brother
ahead of you, maybe ten places.

He was among the country's most decorated poets, winning the Pulitzer in 1995 for "The Simple Truth" and National Book Awards for the 1979 collection "Ashes" and for "What Work Is." His other honors included the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize for lifetime achievement and a National Book Critics Circle Award. In naming Levine poet laureate in 2011, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington cited his "plain-spoken lyricism" and his gift for expressing "the hard work we do to make sense of our lives."

Levine was born in Detroit in 1928, the son of an auto-parts salesman who died when Philip was 5. Although his mother found work as an office manager, Levine remembered his childhood as "a succession of moves from first a house to a series of ever-shrinking apartments."

The future poet was a scrawny kid—5 feet 2 inches, 125 pounds—who imagined himself in peril on the streets of Detroit, "the most anti-Semitic city west of Munich." He would imagine walking home from school with a rifle, shooting at Cadillacs, Lincolns and other cars owned by rich people.

By the end 1942, when he was just 14, he had worked at a soap factory and, like a first kiss, discovered poetry. He would walk the streets late at night, speaking to the "moon and stars about the emotional revolution that was raging" inside him. In college, Wayne State University, he read the verse of Stephen Crane and T.S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams and "immersed" himself in the history of poetry.

"I believed even then that if I could transform my experience into poetry I would give it the value and dignity it did not begin to possess on its own," he later observed.

Exhausting factory hours made Levine so determined to write that he showed up in 1953 at the University of Iowa's Writers Workshop even though a planned fellowship had fallen through. He was told he could sign up for one course, but he enrolled in three. One of his teachers, the poet John Berryman, became a mentor.

"He seemed to feel I had something genuine," Levine told The Paris Review in 1988, "but that I wasn't doing enough with it, wasn't demanding enough from my work. He kept directing me to poetry that would raise my standards."

Another poet, Yvor Winters, allowed Levine to stay with him at his home in California and picked him for a Stanford Writing Fellowship in 1958. Around the same time, Levine joined the faculty of California State in Fresno and remained there for more than 30 years. He also taught at Princeton University, Columbia University and several other colleges.

His debut collection, "On the Edge," came out in 1963. Other books included "Not This Pig," "They Feed the Lion" and "1933." For a time in the 1960s, he lived in Spain, still under the rule of Francisco Franco. Levine developed a deep bond to the country and to its people, especially those who had fought Franco during the country's civil war of the 1930s. He wrote poems about Spain and helped translate works by the Spanish poets Gloria Fuertes and James Sabines.

Back in the U.S., Levine was an opponent of the Vietnam War and defender of civil rights and the rights of working people. In "Coming Home, Detroit 1968," he took in "the charred faces" and "eyes boarded up" of his hometown, which had been devastated by riots the year before. In 1968, he also was among the writers who vowed not to pay taxes until the Vietnam War ended.

"I can remember feeling full of the power of a just cause and believing that power would not fail me. It failed me or I failed it. We didn't really change the way Americans lived, unless you take hairstyles seriously," he once said.

"I'm not a man of action; it finally comes down to that. I'm not so profoundly moral that I can often overcome my fears of prison or torture or exile or poverty. I'm a contemplative person who goes in the corner and writes." Levine was married twice, to Patty Kanterman and to Frances J. Artley, his wife since 1954.

Grande shines as singer, falls short as dancer at halftime

NEW YORK (AP)—Ariana Grande's NBA All-Star performance wasn't a slam dunk, but more like a layup: It was good, but you won't remember it tomorrow.

Grande's 11-minute halftime set on Sunday highlighted the pop-star year the singer's had on the charts: She sang the four Top 10 hits from her latest album, her current single and the song that transitioned her from TV actress to pop singer, 2013's "The Way."

She shined vocally, per usual, with her mix of whispery coos and strong high notes. The 21-year-old entered the stage at Madison Square Garden dressed like a cheerleader, sporting a black-and-white mini skirt, crop top, heels and her signature pony tail.

She led with the upbeat, saxophone-laced "Problem," which featured some of her dancing, coming off a bit awkward and uncomfortable. During "Bang Bang," Grande's dancing was also uneven: When she attempted sexy, simple movement (including a slap to Nicki Minaj's bottom), she looked as if she was doing something wrong—or bad. She kind of was.

On the latter song, Grande did receive a nice assist from the rapper, who also wore a crop top and skirt.

Grande was better when she slowed it down with the mid-tempo number, "Love Me Harder," or when she walked across the stage while singing "The Way," hitting all the right notes.

Grande wasn't the only big-voiced singer at the All-Star Game: Christina Aguilera kicked off the show with a New York-themed performance, singing classics including Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York," Stevie Wonder's "Livin' In the City" and Jay Z's "Empire State of Mind."

The Rockettes backed Aguilera, who rocked all-black and danced with a cane as a prop. Rapper Nas, who is from Queens, came out to perform his own New York anthem, "N.Y. State of Mind."

Queen Latifah, backed by two guitars, sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," and Grammy-nominated R&B vocalist Tamia, who is married to Grant Hill, sang the Canadian National Anthem.

AP
Ariana Grande performs during the halftime show of the NBA All-Star basketball game Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015, in New York.

Lawyer: Hirsch in rehab, doesn't remember attacking exec

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Actor Emile Hirsch does not remember events of the night he is accused of attacking a studio executive because he was drunk, his attorney wrote in a statement.

The actor checked into rehab within days of the incident and remains in treatment, attorney Robert Offer wrote in a statement obtained Friday.

"Regarding the charges that have been brought against Emile Hirsch today, the facts that I can relay are that he consumed an enormous amount of alcohol on the evening in question and he doesn't have any memory of what happened at the time of the allegations," Offer wrote. "However, Emile takes these allegations very seriously, and is devastated that any of this has occurred. "

The "Into the Wild" actor was charged in Utah Thursday with felony aggravated assault over an incident in which a studio executive accused Hirsch of placing her in a headlock and dragging her across a nightclub table in late January.

"A few days after the incident, Emile sought help and checked himself into an alcohol rehabilitation facility, where he remains today, to ensure nothing like this ever happens again," Offer wrote. "Emile is continuing to cooperate fully with authorities."

Hirsch is charged with attacking Daniele Bernfeld, an executive at Insurge Pictures, a subsidiary of Paramount Pictures. The incident occurred during the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah.

Court documents say the altercation occurred Jan. 25 at a nightclub, when Hirsch, looking drunk, approached Bernfeld and asked why she looked "so tough."

He also said she was a "rich kid who should not be at Sundance," court filings state.

Investigators say Hirsch grabbed Bernfeld and she pushed him away. He left and sat with friends before coming back and grabbing the woman from behind, the documents state.

She was put in a chokehold and pulled across the table before Hirsch landed on top of her on the floor, authorities said.

Bernfeld told authorities she saw things going dark and might have blacked out momentarily.

Hirsch is scheduled to make his first court appearance on March 16. He also faces a misdemeanor count of intoxication.

AP
In this Nov. 10, 2014 file photo, actor Emile Hirsch attends the The Museum of Modern Art Film Benefit in New York.

Conan O'Brien in Cuba; TNT show to air March 4

O'Brien

NEW YORK (AP)—Conan O'Brien is spending his Presidents Day weekend in Cuba taping segments for an episode of his TNT talk show to air next month.

The network says Sunday that O'Brien is taking advantage of President Barack Obama's efforts to improve relations with the island country. O'Brien's show on Cuba will air March 4 at 11 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

TNT promises the trip will give O'Brien's viewers "a rare glimpse into the daily life of a country not often seen by American viewers."

'60 Minutes' report by Bob Simon airs days after his death

NEW YORK (AP)—"60 Minutes" remembered its longtime correspondent Bob Simon on Sunday by airing a story he finished on the day he died, four days earlier.

The story, reported by Simon, looked into a possible new treatment for the Ebola virus. It was produced by Simon's daughter, Tanya, a veteran "60 Minutes" producer.

Following the report, fellow correspondent Steve Kroft spoke of Simon's "sense of justice and his sense of the absurd," both of which informed his journalism. Kroft said Simon was "both a model and an inspiration" to his colleagues at CBS News during 47 years at the network.

Simon, 73, died Wednesday night in a car accident in Manhattan.

"60 Minutes" will devote its full hour next Sunday to him and his career.

Ultrasound baby picture gets a negative reaction

DEAR ABBY: Do you know why people nowadays feel the need to announce their pregnancies via ultrasound pictures? I'm sorry, but I really don't want to see all that. I guess some folks think the image of a blurry, black-and-white fetus is "darling." But to me, all I see is an up-close-and-personal snapshot of a stranger's uterus. Even if we're best friends, I don't need all that detail. TMI, right?

I really wish people would deliver this kind of news face-to-face. Or call me, text me, whatever. It serves the same purpose and isn't nearly as graphic.

NOT READY FOR A CLOSE-UP

DEAR NOT READY: If seeing a sonogram is "TMI" for your sensibilities, all you need to do is scroll past it. It's not as if you're being forced to view the fetus. Being able to see the product they're manufacturing pre-delivery helps many couples to bond with their babies, and when people are happy, they often want to share their joy. So loosen up and let them.

DEAR ABBY: I have been married to my husband for 10 years. Prior to that, we dated for seven. (We met when we were teenagers.) My problem is, my mother-in-law still misspells my name, which is Sara. After all these years, she still adds an "h" to the end of my name, regardless of how many times my husband has pointed out the correct spelling.

I don't know why this is an issue, because we send her cards on all the holidays, her birthday, etc., with my name spelled correctly. How should I approach this with her?

SIMPLY SARA IN ARIZONA

DEAR SIMPLY SARA: If the two of you get along well, just smile and ask her why she can't get the spelling of your name right. Then listen. However, if there is tension in your relationship, recognize that this may be a form of passive aggression, that confronting her will make her defensive, and she will find some other way to needle you.

P.S. Another thought. Tell her you've changed the spelling of your name to "Sarah" and she may drop the "h"!

DEAR ABBY: My best friend is dying from lung cancer, which I think has traveled to her brain. I am heartbroken over this. My question is, she seems different now—angry. She jumped on me when we were talking about her disease. Should I just leave her be? Or what should I do?

STANDING BY IN TEXAS

DEAR STANDING BY: Your friend may indeed be angry, and she has a right to be. She may also be very scared. Continue to stand by her because she will need your support and understanding in the months to come.

A diagnosis of metastasized cancer can make someone feel alone and isolated. If she wants to talk about her prognosis, be prepared to listen. If she is too ill to get out of the house, bring the news about what is going on in her circle of friends to her. (Gossip can be distracting.) Do NOT offer advice unless you are asked for it. And if she has a bad day, try to be understanding and forgiving.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

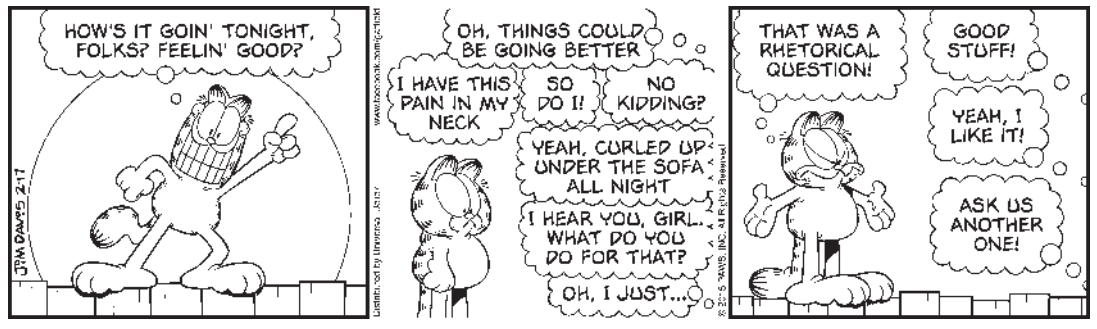
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT ANIMALS HAVE THEIR OWN WORDS FOR SPECIFIC SMELLS?
WELL, SURE.
OK. WHAT'S THE WORD FOR HOW WET LEAVES SMELL?
"SNIPPID."
WHAT'S THE WORD FOR HOW I SMELL?
"TERRIBLE."
WOO HOO HOO HOO HO

Garfield®

By Jim Davis


HOW'S IT GOIN' TONIGHT, FOLKS? FEELIN' GOOD?
OH, THINGS COULD BE GOING BETTER
I HAVE THIS PAIN IN MY NECK
SO DO I!
NO KIDDING?
YEAH, CURLED UP UNDER THE SOFA ALL NIGHT
I HEAR YOU, GIRL. WHAT DO YOU DO FOR THAT?
OH, I JUST...
THAT WAS A RHETORICAL QUESTION!
GOOD STUFF!
YEAH, I LIKE IT!
ASK US ANOTHER ONE!

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

ONE MOCHA LATTE AND TWO BAGELS WITH CREAM CHEESE.
CAN YOU DO THE THING?
I TOLD YOU I WASN'T COMFORTABLE WITH THAT ANYMORE.
PLEEEASE? IT HELPS.
SIGH.
AS YOUR MAGIC BARISTA, I NOW DECLARE THIS MEAL FAT-AND CALORIE-FREE.
REALLY? THANK YOU, MAGIC BARISTA!!
SPECIAL
SPECIAL

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Slightly
5 — -CIO
8 Applaud
12 Portrayal
13 "The Raven" writer
14 Ship's framework
15 Impudent
17 Vicinity
18 Fenway squad, for short
19 Lustrous cotton
21 Bo-Peep's charges
24 Cellar, in real estate ads
25 Get wind of
26 Kuala Lumpur's land
30 Go astray
31 "— isn't so!"
32 Luau dish
33 Misused word
35 Potter's prop
36 Capital of Azerbaijan
37 Logic
38 Flourishes
41 Tackle moguls
42 Dalai —
43 Hogwash
48 Finished
49 Khan title
50 Eat in style
51 Make one's way
52 Present
53 Probability

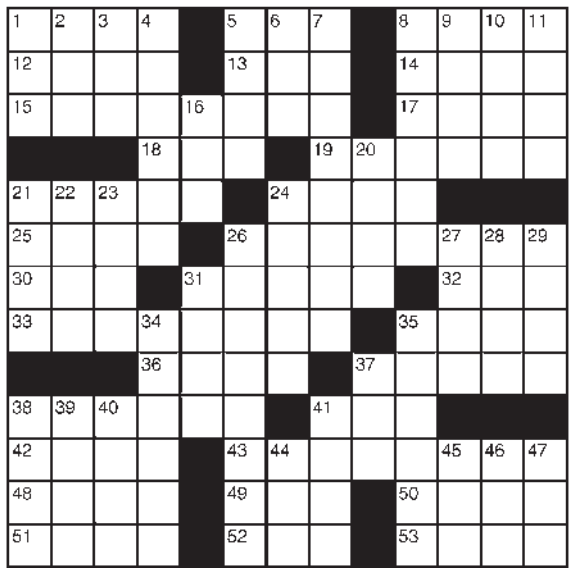
DOWN

1 Branch
2 Slithery squeezer
3 Under the weather
4 Riddle
5 Pinnacle
6 Supporting
7 Spills the beans
8 Talkative
9 Enticement
10 Sheltered
11 Blueprint
16 Burst
20 Latin 101 word
21 Son of Noah
22 Queen of Olympus
23 Count counterpart
24 Ronstadt's "Blue —"
26 Sharpshooter
27 Bridge
28 Charged bits
29 Staffer
31 Unwanted email
34 On the boat
35 Kook
37 Reggae relative
38 Huff and puff
39 Wash
40 Portent
41 Cabbage salad
44 Past
45 Tyke
46 Conclusion
47 "Certainly"

Solution time: 22 mins.

O	W	L	■	S	N	A	F	U	■	W	E	D
O	H	M	■	L	E	D	O	N	■	O	R	E
H	O	U	S	E	W	O	R	K	■	R	I	N
■	■	■	P	U	B	■	D	I	C	K	E	Y
D	E	B	A	T	E	■	S	N	U	B	■	■
R	T	E	■	H	A	S	■	D	R	E	G	S
A	N	N	S	■	Y	E	A	■	E	N	O	L
Y	A	C	H	T	■	W	E	B	■	C	G	I
■	■	H	I	R	E	■	R	I	S	H	O	P
P	A	M	P	E	R	■	U	S	A	■	■	■
E	R	A	■	M	A	R	K	T	W	A	I	N
S	I	R	■	O	S	I	E	R	■	B	R	A
O	A	K	■	R	E	P	R	O	■	C	A	B

Yesterday's answer 2-17



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CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Ed Sheeran, 24; Joseph Gordon-Levitt, 34; Billie Joe Armstrong, 43; Denise Richards, 44.

Happy Birthday: Learn from past experiences and you will reach your goals. Increased discipline will help you overcome any obstacles and guide you to a brighter future. Keep your plans to yourself until you are ready to make a flawless presentation. Don't be fooled by someone offering something different or unfamiliar. Stick to what you know works best for you. Your numbers are 7, 10, 16, 24, 30, 36, 43.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Keeping a low profile will make it easier for you to implement the changes you want to make. Reconnecting with someone you have worked with in the past will lead to an interesting opportunity. Don't settle for less than what you are worth. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Problems will result if you let your emotions take over, leading to indulgence and poor financial and emotional choices. You are best to take a conservative approach to both work and partnerships. Safety must be maintained in all aspects of life. ✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Share your ideas and plans. Don't just think about what it is you want to do—take action. Consider a trip if it will help resolve an issue you face or bring you closer to an answer you are searching for. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Legal, medical and financial matters will surface. Don't be too quick to invest in someone else's venture. Offer advice and your time, not your cash. An idea you have should be developed, put into play and marketed. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Do your own thing, but don't expect everyone else to pitch in and help. The changes you make may not be welcome by everyone, but those who oppose you will eventually recognize your reasoning. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Concentrate on your health, diet and monetary gains. A good healthy lifestyle coupled with a less-stressful financial situation will ward off future problems. Don't look for a quick fix when you should be striving for security and greater stability. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): You have knowledge and good ideas, but if you become lazy, scattered and confused, you will make little progress. Focus on whatever will bring you the greatest returns. Use your insight and past experience to guide you. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Look in the mirror and size up your situation. Don't let anyone manipulate you by making you feel guilty. It's important to follow your dreams. Re-evaluate a love affair. Don't lead anyone on. Approaching your job differently will pay off. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Be careful what you say and how you react. A misunderstanding of a personal nature will unfold, leaving you with a dispute to deal with. Make positive personal improvements instead of trying to change or criticize someone else. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Limit what you are willing to spend or do when it comes to joint ventures or endeavors. You have to have a cutoff if you don't want to end up in a compromising position. Don't feel you have to pay someone else's way. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Ease in to any situation that develops. Listen, observe and consider all options before you make a move. Use your head, collect information and summarize the facts carefully. A false sense of security will lead to overspending or overdoing. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): You have plenty to offer, but you are best to channel your energy into something that will benefit you, not someone else. Working quietly on your own until you have mastered what you want to present will have the biggest impact. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are ambitious, practical and organized. You are focused and goal-oriented.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

7				4				1
		1				2		
	6		2		9		8	
		3	5		4	9		
1								4
		2	1		8	5		
	1		9		6		7	
		8				4		
6				2				8

Difficulty Level ★★ 2/17

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

8	3	9	4	1	6	5	7	2
2	5	6	9	8	7	4	3	1
4	1	7	3	5	2	6	8	9
7	8	4	2	9	3	1	6	5
9	2	1	6	7	5	8	4	3
3	6	5	8	4	1	9	2	7
5	9	8	7	3	4	2	1	6
6	4	3	1	2	9	7	5	8
1	7	2	5	6	8	3	9	4

Difficulty Level ★ 2/17

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

FORK ETIQUETTE Solution: 9 letters

I	L	E	D	E	R	E	P	A	T	B	G	P	L	S
Y	K	F	E	G	N	I	N	I	D	A	N	U	I	U
R	R	O	S	U	C	K	E	T	H	R	I	L	S	G
R	O	R	S	Y	R	E	L	T	U	C	V	L	N	A
E	P	K	E	L	K	C	I	P	E	E	R	I	E	R
B	S	T	R	P	U	P	W	C	R	L	E	N	T	A
W	A	H	T	R	R	A	R	W	L	B	S	G	U	P
A	L	R	V	Ⓟ	R	E	A	O	A	A	S	L	H	S
R	A	E	Ⓘ	D	A	R	L	R	N	T	M	A	T	A
T	D	Ⓔ	A	M	E	S	B	I	E	G	N	R	U	E
S	I	T	I	N	E	E	T	S	S	D	E	C	O	T
H	N	T	W	O	C	A	E	R	L	H	V	D	M	F
A	N	F	O	U	R	M	L	E	Y	E	I	O	E	I
F	E	E	E	N	R	E	T	S	B	O	L	O	A	S
T	R	L	I	A	T	K	C	O	C	T	O	F	T	H

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Yesterday's Answer: Cruises

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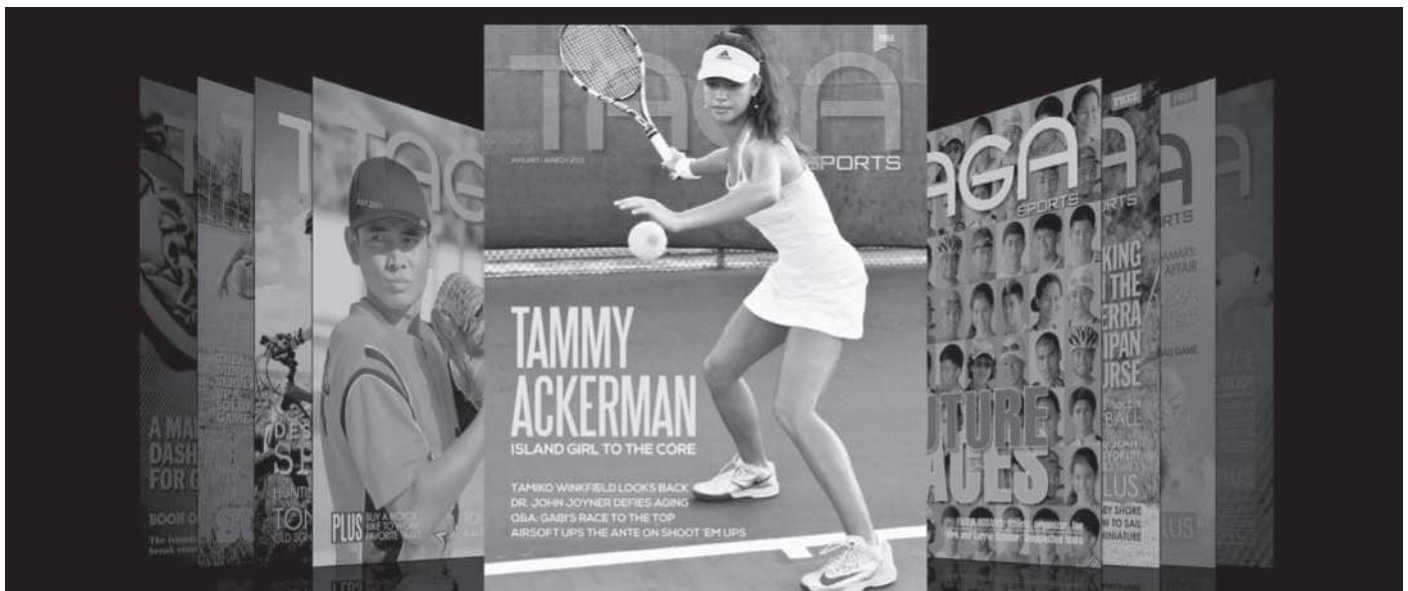

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Westbrook has 41, West edges East in NBA All-Star Game

NEW YORK (AP)—Mixing Broadway and basketball, this NBA All-Star Game was a West Side Story.

Russell Westbrook scored 41 points, one shy of the All-Star record, and the Western Conference beat the East 163-158 on Sunday night in the highest-scoring All-Star Game ever.

The Oklahoma City speedster had a record 27 points by halftime and closed out the scoring with two free throws, falling one point shy of Wilt Chamberlain's 42 points in the 1962 game. He was voted the game's MVP at Madison Square Garden.

The NBA's return to New York showed off everything about the Big Apple, and by the time Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York" played after the game, it was clear Westbrook was king of the hill.

"It's amazing. It's a blessing to be here in New York City," Westbrook said during the MVP ceremony.

James Harden added 29 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the West, which built a 20-point lead in the first half and then pulled away after it was tied at 148 with a little more than 4 minutes remaining.

The combined 321 points surpassed the 318 scored last season, and the 48 3-pointers smashed last year's record of 30.

LeBron James finished with 30 points, but couldn't lead the East to the victory in his favorite NBA arena.

"Don't get no better, man. You play in the Garden in front of these fans," James said.

Harden's 3-pointer snapped the final tie with 4:02 to play and Chris Paul followed with consecutive baskets. Westbrook's fifth 3-pointer put it away at 158-149 with 2:22 to go.

"We just talk about having fun all game long and then at a certain point in the fourth quarter it's time to win," Paul said.

Atlanta's Kyle Korver made seven 3-pointers and scored 21 points for the East, while Washington's John Wall had 19.

But right from the start, the players were sharing the stage.

Christina Aguilera appeared from behind a giant big apple, and belted out some New York-inspired numbers to start the show, joined by the Rockettes.

Entertainment's elite were all over the arena, with players hobnobbing with Jay-Z and Floyd Mayweather near their courtside seats at halftime. But the biggest roar came for a star from another sport—politics.

President Bill Clinton, who had a big night of his own at Madison Square Garden when he was nominated here during the 1992 Democratic National Convention, got a pair of loud ovations when he was shown during Queen Latifah's performance of the national anthem.

Players were quizzed during comedic skits on New York talk and terms, and fuhgeddaboudit, Pau Gasol had no idea what a stoop was. (Stephen Curry knew it was a porch in the front of a building).

Pau won the jump ball against little brother Marc to begin the first All-Star Game featuring two sibling starters, but for a while it looked as if that would be the East's only win of the night.

The West shot out to a 20-point lead, but the East chipped away and cut it to 83-82 before pop star Ariana Grande's halftime performance.

It was New York's first time hosting the weekend since 1998 and a rare journey to the north for the NBA, which has preferred to stage the festivities in the warmth of the South and West.

Even some of the NBA's most fashionable had to choose bundling up over dressing up, a concession to the frigid temperatures they faced during the weekend. But next year might be worse, when the game heads north of the border to Toronto.

Carmelo Anthony struggled to 14 points on 6-of-20 shooting for the East in what may have been his final game of the season. The Knicks star has been battling a sore knee for much of the season and may opt for surgery with the team owning the NBA's worst record.

But even the Knicks' misery couldn't dampen the spirts for this basketball-rich city. Players on the floor were surrounded by some of New York's hoops royalty, such as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Julius Erving. There was even time to celebrate the Knicks: Willis Reed, Walt Frazier, Bill Bradley, Phil Jackson, Earl Monroe and Bernard King were honored during a break in the action.

Tim Duncan had one basket in his 15th All-Star Game, second only to Abdul-Jabbar's 18. Duncan's first was here in 1998, as was Kobe Bryant's.

Bryant had to sit out along with Anthony Davis and Blake Griffin, leaving the West without three elected starters. But they had more than enough talent left, not surprising in another season where the West is the more powerful conference from top to bottom.

East coach Mike Budenholzer played his four Atlanta Hawks together in the first quarter, Al Horford joining Jeff Teague, Paul Millsap and Korver.

"I thought we would all be out there together quite a bit. We were kind of hand signaling to run a few plays, but you weren't really running plays," Korver said. "It was just up and down. But it was great for the Hawks and for the city of Atlanta. It was really cool."

AP

West Team's Russell Westbrook, of the Oklahoma City Thunder, goes up for the basket during the second half of the NBA All-Star basketball game, Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015, in New York. The West Team won 163-158.

All-Star in New York a success, NBA Finals still a ways away

NEW YORK (AP)—As one of the NBA's old men, Tim Duncan has a Madison Square Garden memory that few share.

He played there when the New York Knicks were actually title contenders.

So when he took the floor with the NBA's other stars for the All-Star Game on Sunday night, he was thinking about the good ol' days of the last century. But unlike the Knicks, his days kept getting better after Y2K.

"It's a lot of good memories here," he said. "Made my first All-Star here, won my first NBA championship here. So a lot of really good memories."

His San Antonio Spurs beat the Knicks in five games for the 1999 NBA title, a year after he made his All-Star debut as a rookie in 1998, when Kobe Bryant also made his first appearance.

The NBA's first trip back to New York for All-Star week since '98 was a smashing success, even before the game. City officials estimated it made a nearly $200 million impact on the city, according to NBA Commissioner Adam Silver.

"And as a New Yorker, I'm thrilled to hear that," he said.

Additionally, the 7.2 overnight rating TNT drew in New York for its All-Star Saturday night coverage was the highest on record for the massive market.

So the league and its partners probably can't help but think about how good things could be if the Knicks could ever get back to the NBA Finals. The team hasn't really been close in the last 15 years, with just five playoff appearances and one series win since reaching the 2000 Eastern Conference finals.

Silver, and former Commissioner David Stern before him, dismisses the need for the league to have a strong franchise in New York. Others disagree.

"The league missed that. The league needs that. The league needs New York to be that powerhouse again," Knicks All-Star Carmelo Anthony said.

The powerhouse is just a punching bag now, with a league-worst 10-43 record. The Knicks have been so bad that they had seven games yanked from national TV, eliminating opportunities that could have been used to build even more interest among a larger audience for All-Star weekend.

The NBA covets its international presence, and New York is a more affordable and convenient trip from overseas than many other league cities. That partly explains the record 534 international media members credentialed for the weekend, more than double last year's total in New Orleans.

If New York could stage an NBA Finals, some of them would surely return.

Things seemed headed in the right direction when the Knicks acquired Anthony in 2011, bringing a global basketball A-lister to New York for the first time since Patrick Ewing patrolled the paint at Madison Square Garden. Three straight playoff berths followed before the Knicks tumbled back toward the bottom, making Sunday the likely last highlight this season.

Before braving Arctic-like temperatures and rim-swaying winds whipping down Manhattan's frozen streets to head to the Garden, the NBA celebrated New York and the city's game during a legends brunch attended by basketball immortals.

Among the players on hand were Bill Russell, Oscar Robertson, Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Willis Reed.

Reed, "The Captain," led the Knicks to the 1970 title and is best remembered for hobbling onto the floor of the "world's most famous" arena for Game 7 with an injured knee and leading New York to a win over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Reed's Knicks won again in 1973 but never again. Anthony is still hoping he and team president Phil Jackson, Reed's old teammate, can get the Knicks back there.

"Everybody would love that," Reed said. "New York loves basketball, and the energy around the city when the teams are good is different. But every team wants to win a title. That's not always going to happen. I believe that Phil is going to get our team back to where we once were."

LeBron James elected vice president of NBA players' union

NEW YORK (AP)—LeBron James is about to play a new power position—vice president.

The Cavaliers star was unanimously elected first vice president of the National Basketball Players Association on Friday, giving the game's top player a leadership role within a union set to square off in the future with the league's owners over revenue.

James was elected during the union's annual meeting as part of All-Star weekend at a hotel near Times Square. A person familiar with James' election said Clippers All-Star guard Chris Paul, the union's president, had urged the four-time MVP to accept a prominent role within the union. The person, who spoke on condition of anonymity before union executive director Michele Roberts announced the election, said James wanted to be deeply involved in future collective bargaining with the league.

Roberts could hardly wait to announce James' addition.

"We have a new vice president who was elected unanimously. His name is LeBron James," she said, saying it slowly for emphasis. "I can not tell you how delighted I am because it simply confirms that our union is supported by players all across the spectrum. LeBron's addition to our executive committee is evidence of that. This is a great day for our union."

Snedeker breaks own record and wins Pebble Beach

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (AP) — Coming off the worst season of his career, Brandt Snedeker's mission was to become relevant again. He was eligible for only one major and none of the World Golf Championships, and he hated the idea of the world's best players competing without him.

That's what made Sunday at Pebble Beach so sweet. The view walking up the 18th fairway was spectacular for so many reasons.

Snedeker polished off a week that was close to perfect on the Monterey Peninsula by closing with 5-under 67 for a three-shot victory over Nick Watney. With only one bogey all week—yes, that still gnaws at him—Snedeker broke his own scoring record in the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

"It was an emotional win for me today because it's been a long time coming," Snedeker said. "The last year-and-a-half has not been up to my standard."

Once he took the lead for good on the par-5 sixth hole after Watney's worst swing of the week—a 4-iron into Stillwater cover—Snedeker pulled away by leaving the mistakes to everyone else. He finished at 22-under 265, breaking by two shots the record he set two years ago at Pebble Beach, and by two shots the winning score under par held by Phil Mickelson (2007) and Mark O'Meara (1997).

It was the seventh win of his career, his second title in three years at Pebble Beach, and the timing could not have been better for Snedeker.

He's back in the Masters.

AP

Brandt Snedeker holds his trophy and poses with Clint Eastwood on the 18th green of the Pebble Beach Golf Links after winning the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am golf tournament Sunday, Feb. 15, 2015, in Pebble Beach, Calif.

The victory moved him to No. 31 in the world, which should put him in all the WGC events, starting with Doral in three weeks.

"It's nice to be back in those tournaments," Snedeker said. "I can set my schedule a little bit. And all the hard work I've done the last year is paying off now. I know this is a great week, but I look forward to parlaying this week into more weeks coming up and keep this momentum going."

Snedeker decided last June to work with Butch Harmon to get a better understanding of his swing, and it took time for it all to sink in. Worse yet, he lost his putting touch toward the latter part of the summer months. Now, he looks like the Snedeker of old, walking briskly up to putts, looking at the hole as he takes five short practice strokes and then gets over the ball and gives it a pop.

He didn't have any three-putts all week, not an easy feat on poa annua greens with 156 players and their amateur partners.

Watney opened with four straight birdies, but three bogeys in a five-hole stretch at the turn cost him. He rallied with a pair of birdies for a 69 to secure second place alone, a good step for him getting his game back in order.

Charlie Beljan closed with a 66 and finished third.

Jim Furyk, the 54-hole leader, didn't make his first birdie until the 11th hole. He missed three birdie putts inside 10 feet on the front nine, went out in 38, and was out of the hunt halfway through the final round. It was the ninth time Furyk failed to convert when he had at least a share of the 54-hole lead since his last victory at the 2010 Tour Championship. Then again, this was his first competition in five months.

"I only made two birdies today and I hit the ball way better than that," Furyk said.

He tied for seventh, six shots behind, along with Jordan Spieth and Matt Jones.

With a big crowd celebrating one of the most beautiful weeks ever at Pebble, the final round quickly turned into a battle between Snedeker and Watney.

Watney, thrilled at the chance to play with San Francisco Giants catcher Buster Posey, opened with four straight birdies to build a two-shot lead. But on the par-3 fifth, a photographer shot his camera at the top of Watney's swing and he flinched, coming up well short and in a bunker. Watney made bogey, and Snedeker rolled in a 15-foot birdie putt for a two-shot swing to tie for the lead.

Watney never caught up.

"I thought Brandt handled himself really, really well," Watney said. "Maybe in trouble one time, but very solid. So that's what I need to be like next time."

Torrey Pines winner Jason Day, who opened with a 72 at Pebble Beach in great scoring conditions, got within two shots of the lead until the putts stopped falling. He closed with a 67 and tied for fourth with Pat Perez (68) and Dustin Johnson, who closed with a 66. It was the second tournament for Johnson since he returned from a six-month leave of absence for what he described only as a personal challenge.

Perez and Michael Lund, the co-founder of Pandora Jewelry, won the pro-am competition at 42 under.

Packers coach McCarthy gives up play calling job on offense

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP)—Admitting that he is "going to miss it," Packers coach Mike McCarthy said Thursday that he will give up his job calling plays for Aaron Rodgers and the rest of the Green Bay offense.

The decision is part of a significant shake-up on that side of the ball, where the Packers led the NFL in scoring in 2014 and Rodgers won his second NFL MVP award.

McCarthy is handing off play-calling duties to Tom Clements, whom he promoted from offensive coordinator to associate head coach. Edgar Bennett was named offensive coordinator, while Bennett's responsibilities as the wide receivers coach were given to Alex Van Pelt, who will now coach both quarterbacks and receivers.

In addition, McCarthy promoted Ron Zook to special teams coordinator to replace Shawn Slocum, who was fired Jan. 30, and promoted Jason Simmons to Zook's former position as assistant special teams coach. Former Oklahoma defensive line coach and co-defensive coordinator Jerry Montgomery was hired to help coach the defensive front, and ex-San Francisco 49ers offensive line coach Mike Solari was added to help offensive line coach James Campen.

"It's going to make us better. I'm very confident in that. That's why I did it," said McCarthy, who is entering his 10th season as head coach and had called the plays on offense since he was hired in January 2006.

"It's fun to call plays on Sundays," he said. "Don't get me wrong. It's probably something I enjoyed it more than anything as far as the game. There's nothing like Sundays. ... To go out there and compete against the coordinator or who's across the field is something I've taken a lot of pride in, had success in, really enjoyed. But this change and the confidence I have in Tom and Aaron, I feel great about it and we'll be better for it."

The sweeping changes come less than a month after the Packers' 28-22 overtime loss to the Seattle Seahawks in the NFC Championship game. Green Bay blew a 16-0 halftime lead and a 19-7 lead in the final five minutes.

"The reason to do this is about winning championships. That part never changes," McCarthy replied when asked if the changes are a response to that game. "This process that I go through is the same each and every year. This is not the first time I thought about this. I (just) think this is the time to do it. I think our staff's ready. I think it's an opportunity for guys to grow.

"I feel we'll be better offensively from that," he said. "I know I have a lot more to offer to our football team. We're going to get that. This is a decision that's made over the long haul. One game doesn't make decisions on how you run your program. Never has been, never will be here."

It was clear that the decision in part has to do with getting McCarthy more involved with special teams. Two of the game-changing plays against the Seahawks occurred on special teams: Seattle scored a touchdown on a fake field goal that McCarthy later acknowledged came with Packers in the wrong call defensively. The Seahawks also recovered an onside kick with 2 minutes to play when tight end Brandon Bostick tried to field the ball instead of blocking as he was supposed to do.

"I think special teams is always under the microscope because it's one play," said Zook, who was the Pittsburgh Steelers' special teams coach from 1996 through 1998. "You don't get second down or third down on special teams. It's one play and that's what people remember."

McCarthy didn't sound concerned about being less involved offensively and went so far as to say that the change should benefit Rodgers, whom he said has "an excellent working relationship" with Clements and Van Pelt.

"I think you know me well enough that big changes aren't anything I do in haste," McCarthy said. "I will split my time equally with offense, defense and special teams. Obviously, with my past duties I did not do that. I'm excited about the improvement we'll make with these changes."

SIDEBAR

Ray Rice posts Facebook statement apologizing to Ravens fans

BALTIMORE (AP)—Ex-Ravens player Ray Rice has posted a statement apologizing to fans for a "horrible mistake" and asking for forgiveness ahead of the one-year anniversary of a domestic-violence charge.

In a statement released Friday to The Baltimore Sun and posted on his Facebook page, Rice wrote he was sorry for letting down the young fans who looked up to him.

He wrote: "There is no excuse for domestic violence, and I apologize for the horrible mistake I made."

Rice was charged last year in New Jersey with assaulting then-fiancee Janay Palmer. In September, a video surfaced showing Rice punching Palmer in an elevator.

The Ravens released the running back after the video became public. Rice, who is a free agent, says his statement is not a farewell.

Dispute erupts over remains of Ernie Banks

CHICAGO (AP)—Ernie Banks, the beloved Chicago Cubs great who once said he wanted to have his ashes scattered at Wrigley Field, is at the center of a battle over his remains as his estranged wife has gone to court to prevent a longtime friend of "Mr. Cub" from having his remains cremated.

The dispute involving most famous player in Cubs history, was confirmed Friday by Howard Golden, an attorney representing the estranged wife, Elizabeth Banks.

"Suddenly, it came up," he said. "It's unfortunate."

According to court records, Elizabeth Banks filed a petition to prevent a woman who describes herself in the documents as a longtime friend of Ernie Banks, his caretaker and the executor of Banks' estate from having him cremated. The woman, Regina Rice, asserted her rights to dispose of Banks' remains after his death last month at the age of 83, according to documents filed by Elizabeth Banks' attorneys on Feb. 2.

"Petitioner (Elizabeth Banks) is without recourse and shall suffer irreparable damage should Regina's desires to cremate the remains of the decedent be granted," she wrote.

Elizabeth Banks has successfully thus far prevented the body from being cremated, Golden said.

But it was unclear where exactly the body was taken. According to Golden, Banks is buried at Graceland Cemetery, just blocks from Wrigley Field. But a person who answered the phone at Graceland but declined to give her name said Banks is not buried there. And Dave Babczak, manager of Donnellan Funeral Home, which handled the logistics surrounding the Jan. 31 funeral service, declined to comment on the dispute, saying only that Banks' remains were no longer at the funeral home.

AP

In this March 24, 2014 file photo, Chicago Cubs Hall of Fame slugger Ernie Banks smiles after an interview at the Cubs offices in Chicago. Banks died Jan. 23, 2015.

In court documents obtained by The Associated Press, there is no mention that Banks wanted his ashes scattered at the ballpark where he played his entire 19-year Hall of Fame career. But over the years, families of devoted fans have slipped into the ballpark to scatter the ashes of loved ones who spent their lives rooting for the Cubs and Banks, who on at least one occasion years ago, famously told a local newspaper reporter that after he died he wanted "my ashes spread out over Wrigley Field—with the wind blowing out."

The Cubs declined to comment on the dispute. Rice did not answer her phone and her attorney did not return calls for comment.

The documents are included in what is a larger dispute over control of the Banks estate.

Included in the file are documents in which Rice claims Banks was attempting to end his marriage to Elizabeth Banks, his fourth wife. The documents include a petition for divorce, signed by Ernie Banks, in which the Hall of Famer seeks to end his marriage because "irreconcilable differences have caused irretrievable breakdown of the marriage" and that Elizabeth Banks had "committed extreme and repeated acts of mental cruelty upon petitioner (Ernie Banks)."

A document titled "Last Will and Testament" and signed by Ernie Banks on Oct. 17 of last year says he was "in the process of finalizing divorce" from his wife and that he had appointed Rice as the executor of his will. Nowhere does Banks discuss what he wants done with his remains.

The dispute appears to be far from over. The attorney for Elizabeth Banks at one point disputes the validity of the will, saying only that it was "allegedly signed" by Ernie Banks.

BASA Men's Masters to open on March

The Belau Amateur Softball Association is pleased to announce the opening of the Belau Men's Master Softball League.

The league is tentatively scheduled to start in early March and entrance fee is set at $400. Games will be played at the Dan Dan Softball Field on Sundays and you must be 40 years old at the start date of the league to participate.

For more information or to register your team, please contact Brian Adelbai, Newman Techur, or Peoris Besong via email at nennn2ur@gmail.com.

In other news, BASA would also like to open the Belau Women's Softball League. A minimum of six teams is required, so all interested teams are encouraged to register and contact BASA. ***(PR)***

BELING

From Page 28

bye in the opening week.

In the boys U14 singles, Robbie Schorr got the championship that he missed last year.

Schorr, who bowed to Lizama in a close finale last season, 6-8, swept Vincent Tudela in yesterday's title match, 6-3, 7-5. The championship was Schorr's second in the age group under the 2014-2015 calendar of the organizing Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association. He won in the Tan Holdings Tennis Classic late last year against Tudela, too.

Schorr and Tudela arranged their second straight title duel after posting contrasting semis wins. Schorr edged Ken Song in the upper bracket semis last Sunday, 6-1, 3-6, 10-6, while Tudela downed Tony Kim, 6-4, 6-4. Tudela also defeated Steven Goodwin, 6-2, 6-1, to barge into the semifinals, while Schorr ousted A.J. Hudkins, 6-0, 6-0, for a Final Four collision against Song, a 6-1, 6-2 winner over Joshua Abragan.

Meanwhile, results of the other boys singles, girls singles, and mixed-up doubles will be reported later this week.

SAPONG

From Page 28

to four-year terms in the Oceania Athletics Association council.

Sapong, Guam's Jay Antonio, and Palau's Piora Koshiba will be joining Trevor Spittle, Titaua Juventin-Maurin, and Matthew Mahon on the OAA council to be headed anew by president Geoff Gardner of Norfolk Island.

Sapong said three Micronesians elected on the council would not only be beneficial for the CNMI but also for the entire region.

"It would make networking much easier in Micronesia and the CNMI would benefit from it. It would also open the doors to other organizations in the region to have closer ties with OAA," said Sapong in an interview with the *Saipan Tribune*.

The Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, and Nauru are the other members of the Micronesian region aside from the CNMI, Guam, and Palau.

"It would get more island nations in Micronesia engaged in OAA affairs and strengthen ties in the region," added Sapong, who was given the OAA merit award for his more than 20 years of service in athletics.

Sapong said they are now looking forward for the 2016 Micronesian Championships, which will be hosted by the Federated States of Micronesia.

"We're looking forward for FSM's hosting of the regional championships. The OAA council is fully supporting the local organizing committee," said Sapong, who added that the CNMI would also bid for the 2017 edition.

"We're going to make a strong bid since the Oleai track would be finished by then. Facilities and accommodation are the keys in hosting a good event."

Resurfacing of the Oleai track facility is set for March or once the contract is awarded to the winning bidder.

The Northern Marianas Sports Association, which is now tasked to maintain the facilities at the Oleai Sports Complex, would oversee the entire project to make sure the construction manager and off-island expert will do the work according to the standards set by the International Association of Athletics Federations.

LIZAMA

From Page 28

JUNIOR LEAGUE
Enforcers 12, Red Sox 8

Gloyd Martin also had an inside-the-park homer—a solo shot to center field—in the Enforcers' victory.

Martin went 4-for-4 with three runs and two doubles while Wilbur Cruz, 3-for-4, scored twice in the game. Larson Sebitang had an RBI double—drove in Shakobe Rangamar in the third—in 2-for-4 batting with one run scored.

Pedro Maratita gave up one hit in 2 1/2 innings on the mound while striking out two and walking six batters.

Rangamar pitched 4 1/2 five-hit innings, fanning nine and walking three batters. He settled in after giving up a double to Luis Blas in the third.

He also pitched three shutout innings, from four to six, before Derrick Seusora scored an earned run in the seventh.

MAJOR LEAGUE
Falcons 24, IT&E Comets 0

Isiah Tegita went 4-for-5 with an inside-the-park homerun. He also scored four times.

Kyle Kapileo also went 4-for-5 with a double and a triple. He had three runs and three RBIs.

McDonald's 27, Jets 3

Donovan Deleon Guerrero hit an inside-the-park homerun and a bases-clearing triple in the second inning.

Deleon Guerrero also pitched three innings allowing the Jets to one hit, while fanning seven and walking two.

Delvin Ada blasted two inside-the-park homeruns in a 4-for-4 appearance at the plate with four runs and five RBIs while John Santos went perfect at the plate, 4-for-4, with a triple, three runs, and an RBI.

On Saturday, the Jaidan Babauta went 3-for-4 to lead the Docomo Ol'Aces to a 15-5 win over the Kagman Little Legals. He scored four runs with two doubles.

Orren Cruz homered twice in the Red Sox's 13-3 thrashing of the Twins. Zachary Camacho also had two inside-the-park round-trippers.

The Braves edged the Kagboys, 8-6, in another game.

In Saturday's Junior League game, the Fielders scored a 13-9 decision over the Falcons.

Greg Sablan had a pair of singles and Jayden Tenorio had two RBIs in their 2-for-4 performances at the plate.

Noel Cabrera and James Kintaro shared pitching duties giving up 11 hits with seven strikeouts and one walk.

In the Seniors division, the Enforcers used an eight-run first inning in completing an 11-1 win over the Fielders.

Fielders pitcher Jadrian Camacho was ejected by chief umpire Glody Martin and will be out for the entire season for arguing his calls.

Vergil Secharmidal went 2-for-3 with a pair of runs and a double, while J. J. Chong also had a 2-for-3 batting with a double, two runs, and an RBI. Henry Lizama, 2-for-2, scored one run and had an RBI.

Secharmidal also pitched two shutout innings in start giving up two hits with one strikeout and one walk.

Lizama pitched three innings in relief giving up one earned run when Ryuta Onuki's double in the top of the fifth drove in Fielders catcher Daven Hocog. He also allowed five hits and had one strikeout and one walk.

KB Hite, Armatech pound foes

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Armatech and KB Hite eased their way to lopsided victories in the 2015 Graphics Invitational Masters Basketball League last Friday night at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

Armatech whipped the Saipan Warriors in the first game, 102-65, while KB Hite also routed the Slashers, 91-70, in the last match of the weekend to remain at the top half of the team standings. Armatech now has a 4-1 record for second place behind the unbeaten Blue Haus (5-0), while KB Hite kept the No. 3 spot with its 3-2 mark. The Slashers and Saipan Warriors hold 1-3 and 1-4 slates, respectively, while idle Bammy's Restaurant (2-2) and Boomers (0-4) complete the field.

Both Armatech and KB Hite cruised to victory after pulling away in the second quarter.

Armatech was still down by 2, 18-20, at the start of the second period when it exploded for 29 points to seize control of the match at the turn, 47-30. Three-point shooter James Abuy anchored Armatech's pivotal run in the second frame, knocking in 9 points, while big men Haejun Park and Bruce Berline played their first game of the season and combined for 8 in that period.

The Saipan Warriors was held to four field goals in the second-quarter slowdown and they had no player scoring more than one field goal in that canto. They never recovered from thereon as they failed to match Armatech's firepower in the second half.

Armatech continued pouring in points in the second half, drilling 28 more in the third and 30 in the fourth. Four players scored multiple baskets for Armatech in the third, while Bernardo Montano and George Poquiz put the finishing touches in the fourth, teaming up for 14 markers.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

KB Hite's Marlon Sison, left and teammate Randy Mungcal battle for the rebound during their game against Blue Haus in the 2015 Graphics Invitational Masters Basketball League last Wednesday night at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium. KB Hite lost to Blue Haus, 90-98, but bounced back quickly with a 91-70 thrashing of the Slashers.

Abuy top-scored for Armatech with his 21 points, while Montano and Berline chipped in 14 and 12, respectively.

In the second game, KB Hite turned a single-digit lead at the end of the first to a 24-point halftime edge after limiting the Slashers to 8 points in the second period.

Ahead by only 8 after the first 10 minutes of play, 25-17, KB Hite drew contributions from every player it fielded in the second quarter for a commanding 49-25 lead. Five players nailed at least two baskets apiece for KB Hite, while only Gerry Farinas logged more than one field goal in the Slashers' meltdown.

The Slashers picked up their scoring in the second half, tallying 20-plus points in each of the last two quarters, however, KB Hite countered almost every basket the former made to keep its safe distance en route to the double-digit winning margin.

Ed Pangelinan paced KB Hite with his 17 points, while Farinas had 12 for the Slashers.

Meanwhile, the league has five remaining games in the regular season, counting last night's pair of matches. At the end of the round-robin play, the top team will automatically advance to the semis, while the six remaining squads will battle for the three other semis tickets. The playoff pairings will be No. 2 vs 7; No. 3 vs No.6, and No. 4 vs No. 5. The four semifinalists will then compete in another round-robin playoff with the Top 2 teams marching into the finals.

First Game

Armatech 102 – Abuy 21, Montano 14, Berline 12, Bartolo 8, Poquiz 8, Tobias 8, Park 7, Gabaldon 2, Malasarte 2, Manalili 2, Gatdula 2.

Saipan Warriors 65 – Samson 20, Geli 14, Surima 8, Tiples 7, Santos 6, Alano 2, Mateo 2, Abadilla 2.

Scoring by quarters: 18-20, 47-30, 75-42, 102-65.

Second Game

KB Hite 91 – Pangelinan 17, Pineda 14, Verano 12, Koebel 8, Duenas 7, Sison 6, Demapan 6, Yalung 6, Castro 4, Morales 3, Mungcal 2, Garcia 2.

Slashers 70 – Farinas 12, S. Ebuen 11, Tengco 10, O. Ebuen 9, Villasan 9, Tibayan 6, Leong 6, Abadilla 4.

Scoring by quarters: 25-17, 49-25, 65-48, 91-71.

Tammy, Dangol set age group marks

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center members registered the three age group records made in last month's 2014-2015 SSC Pentathlon Swim Meet at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

Eight-year-old Ashley Dangol owned two of those records. Her first came in the U8 division's 50m backstroke, as she timed in at 43.69 seconds, eclipsing the 45.39 seconds, which she logged on Oct. 1, 2014. She also ruled the race, finishing ahead of fellow Tsunami Saipan swimmers Kana Suzuki (56.32 seconds) and Shaunalyn Babauta (1:00.73).

Dangol earned her second age group record in the 50m freestyle as she clocked in at 37.04 seconds, surpassing the more than 10-year mark of Saipan Swim Club's Jellian Majors, who tallied 38.97 on March 22, 2004.

Besides the 50m freestyle and 50m backstroke, Dangol also raced in the 50m butterfly and 50m breaststroke and won both events, too en route to taking the top honors in the age group. Her 39.49 seconds in the 50m butterfly broke her personal best time of 41.69 seconds and bested Suzuki's 53.79 second and Babauta's 1:12.09.

In the 50m breaststroke, she timed in at 55.33 seconds, missing a PBT (55.25 seconds), but was good enough to beat Suzuki (1:03.61) and Babauta (1:04.33) anew. With her four first place finishers, Dangol collected 36 points (9 per each first place finish) to prevail against Suzuki (28) and Babauta (24).

Meanwhile, Miku Tammy joined Dangol on the short list of age group record breakers last month. The 12-year old swimmer completed the 50m butterfly race in 32.28 seconds, shattering the old mark (32.54) she registered on March 22, 2014 in the 11 to 12 division contest of the 2014 Saipan Swim Club International Meet.

Tammy went on to beat five other swimmers in the individual rankings after gaining 43 points. She earned the remaining 34 markers from the 50m backstroke (first, 35.92 seconds), 50m breaststroke (second, 48.03), 50m freestyle (first, 31.93 seconds), and 200m individual medley (first, 2:50.96). Tammy ruled the 11 to 12 age group against teammates Sophia Gauran (37) and Aika Watanabe (37) and SSC's Conatu Kaga (25), Jin Ju Thompson (20), and Jasmin Frink (15).

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tsunami Saipan's Miku Tammy, left, and Ashley Dangol pose for a photo during a break in the training session at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool last week.

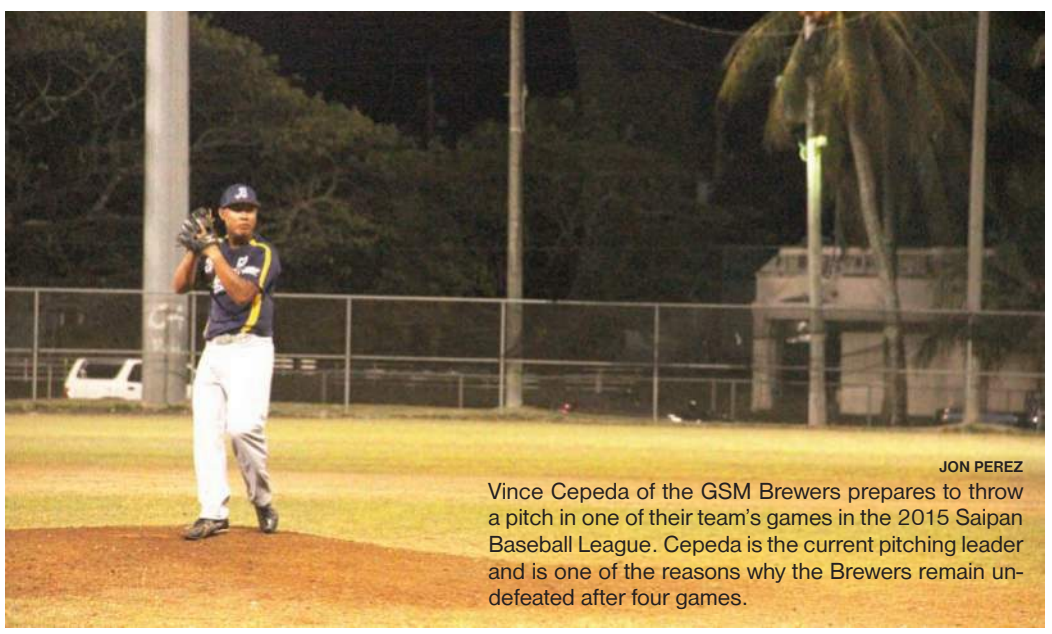
Cepeda leads pitching in SBL

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

GSM Brewers ace pitcher Vince Cepeda continues to lead the ERA and the strikeout categories in the latest stats provided by Saipan Baseball League coordinator Tony Rogolifoi.

Cepeda remains clean in the ERA department after a total of 16.1 innings pitched. The Jets' Terson Eina and the Fielders' Anthony Tenorio joined him but the two had only pitched 7.2 and 6.0 innings, respectively.

The North Starz's Jonathan Tenorio came in fourth with a 1.35 ERA followed by the Falcons' Peter Lieto (1.64), and Kevin Villagomez of the Fielders (1.69).



JON PEREZ

Vince Cepeda of the GSM Brewers prepares to throw a pitch in one of their team's games in the 2015 Saipan Baseball League. Cepeda is the current pitching leader and is one of the reasons why the Brewers remain undefeated after four games.

Aaron Benavente of the Falcons and Leonard Sablan of the Brewers were tied from seventh to eighth spots with a 1.80 ERA with both pitching five innings each.

Dave Jones of the Falcons and Kevin Kapileo of the Yankees complete the top 10 with 2.00 and 3.52 ERAs, respectively.

Cepeda also topped the strikeouts department with 31, followed by the Falcons' Peter Lieto's 25 and the 23 of the Jets' Mike Muna.

The Saipan Stevedore Yankees slugger Gary Cruz continues to lead the league in batting with a .525 average with teammate Jerome Delos Santos (.444) coming in fourth. The North Starz's Chad Atalig (.500) and the Brewers' Jun Rabauliman (.467) came in second and third, respectively.

Fielders teammates Anthony Tenorio and Verlance Secharmidal placed fifth and sixth with .429 and .412 averages, while the Jets' Davie Matagolai batted .400 at seventh spot.

Peter Tomokane of the Yankees led three other players from eighth to 11th places with a .385 average followed by Brewers teammates Jesse Brel and Nokki Saralu, and the Jets' Keola Camacho.

Pat Alepuyo of the Brewers (.353) and the Fielders Cedric Ada (.348) placed 12th and 13th while Secharmidal, Alex Benavente (Falcons), Roy Celis (Brewers), and Ben Jones (Yankees) are bunched up at .333.

Ricardo Dela Cruz leads the league in runs scored with nine, while Delos Santos had eight. Jones and Rabauliman made seven apiece.

Alepuyo, Tom Agulto, and Manny Sablan had two doubles each while Jones, who remains the only player to hit a home run, is the RBI leader with eight followed by Alepuyo's seven and Cruz's six.

Westbrook has 41, West edges East in NBA All-Star Game

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KB Hite, Armatech pound foes

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Back-to-back championships for Beling

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Saipan Tennis Academy instructor Luke Beling defended his men's singles title after coasting past junior player Moris Villanueva, 6-0, 6-0, in their championship showdown in the 2015 Coconut Tennis Classic yesterday at the American Memorial Park tennis courts.

Luke, who won last year's crown against Jeff Race, Fr. Ryan Jimenez, and Gary Ramsey in a round-robin format competition, prevailed anew this year without dropping a single set in three matches. He started his title defense with a 6-0, 6-0 crushing of Dong Min Lee in the opening week of the two-weekend tournament and bagged the finals berth at the top half of the bracket after sweeping another junior player Robbie Schorr in the semifinals last Saturday, 6-0, 6-1.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Luke Beling, seen here chasing the ball down the baseline after a serve from Negahr Ratguiy during their mixed-up doubles title match in the 2015 Coconut Tennis Classic yesterday at the AMP tennis courts, won the men's singles crown against Moris Villanueva, 6-0, 6-0.

At the bottom half, Villanueva fashioned out a thrilling 6-7, 7-5, 10-8 victory over long-time CNMI coach Jeff Race in the semis to earn the right to face Beling in the finals. Before his tough win over Race, Villanueva also grinded out a 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 triumph against Colin Ramsey. Race, on the other hand, won over junior player Michael Ren, 6-2, 6-1, for a semis date with Villanueva last Saturday.

Villanueva also played in the boys U18 singles, but fell short in his title bid, too, as he lost to the semifinals against the eventual champion Ramsey. Ramsey survived Villanueva in an exciting Final Four pairing at the top half of the draw last Saturday, 3-6, 7-6, 10-8, to arrange a title duel against Luther Lizama. Before his hard-fought win over Villanueva, Ramsey, who was a losing semifinalist to Jake Lee last year, came from a 6-1, 6-1 triumph over Steven Lee to barge into the Final Four anew.

Lizama had an easier semis assignment, as it took him only two sets to eliminate Michael Ren, 6-2, 6-1. Ren made it to the Final Four following his 6-1, 6-0 victory against Sunny Cho in Week 1, while Lizama got a

See BELING on Page 26

Lizama hits for the cycle in Enforcers win

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Franklin Lizama hit for the first cycle of the season to lead the Enforcers to an 11-0 shutout win over the Fielders in yesterday's game in the Seniors division of the 2015 Saipan Little League at the Francisco M. "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

Lizama went 5-for-5 with three runs and two RBIs. He had an RBI double in the first inning, single in the second, and a triple in the third.

The Enforcers slugger completed the cycle with an inside-the-park solo homerun in the fifth inning.

Lizama took Fielders starter John Camacho's first pitch to deep center field for that inside-the-park round-tripper.

Ethan Babauta pitched five shutout innings giving up two hits while striking out two and walking one batter.

See LIZAMA on Page 26

Fielders pitcher John Camacho throws to the plate while the Enforcers' Robby Celis, background, runs toward third base in their the Seniors division game yesterday in the Saipan Little League at the Francisco M. "Tan Ko" Baseball Field.

JON PEREZ

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI's Robin Sapong, left, poses with Oceania Athletics Association council members Jay Antonio of Guam, Piora Koshiba of Palau, Matthew Mahon, Titaua Juventin-Maurin, Trevor Spittle, and president Geoff Gardner.

Sapong hopes for stronger ties within Micronesia

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Northern Marianas Athletics secretary general Robin Sapong is hoping that the CNMI track and field association will develop stronger ties with its counterpart organizations in the Micronesia after he and two others from the region were elected

See SAPONG on Page 26